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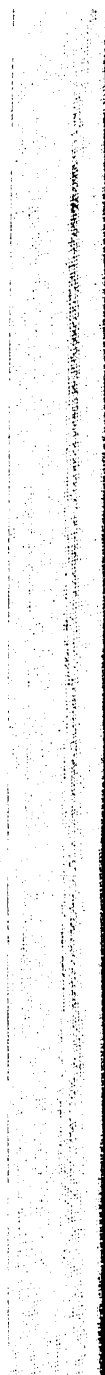
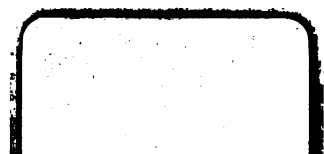
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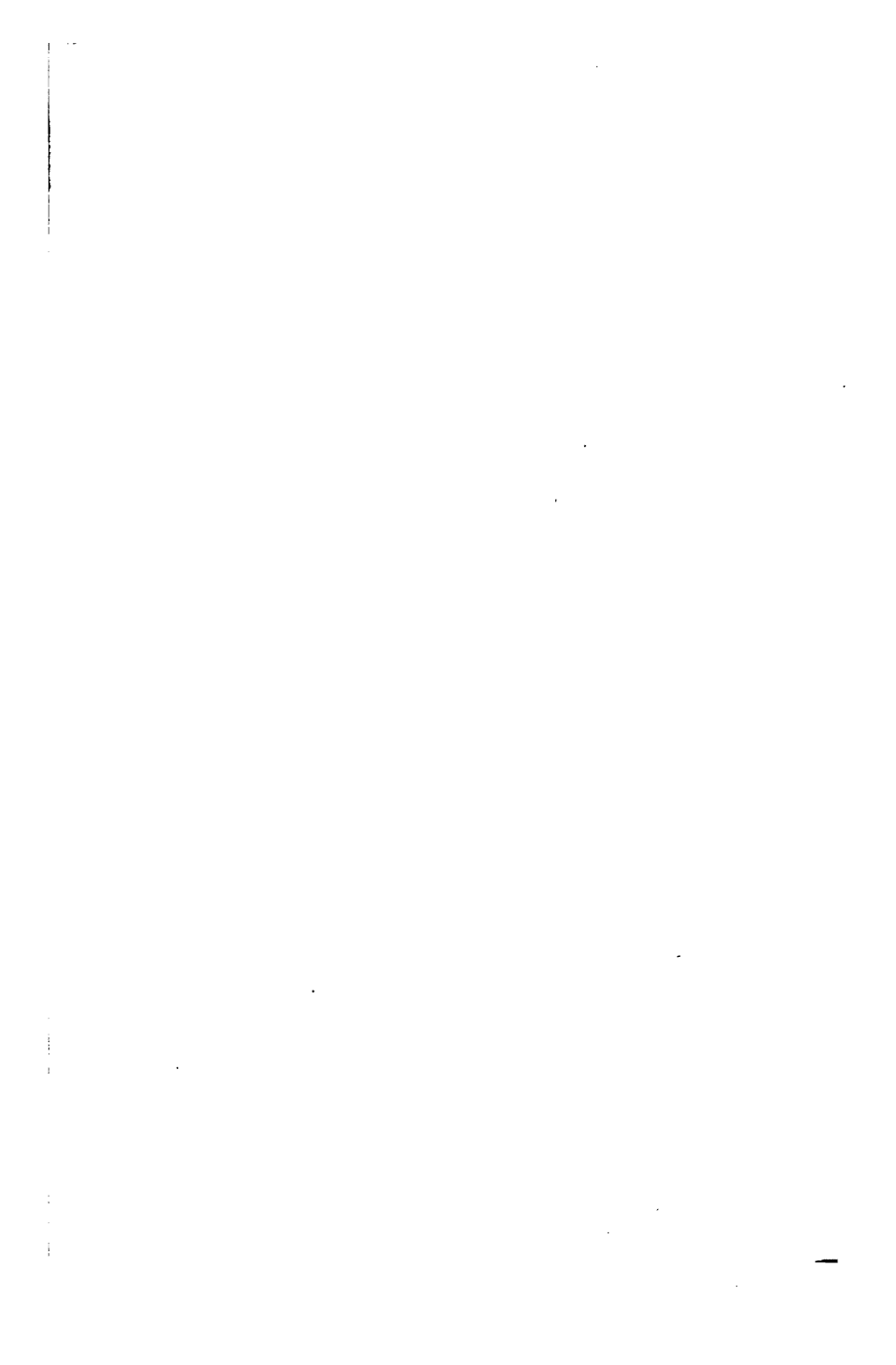
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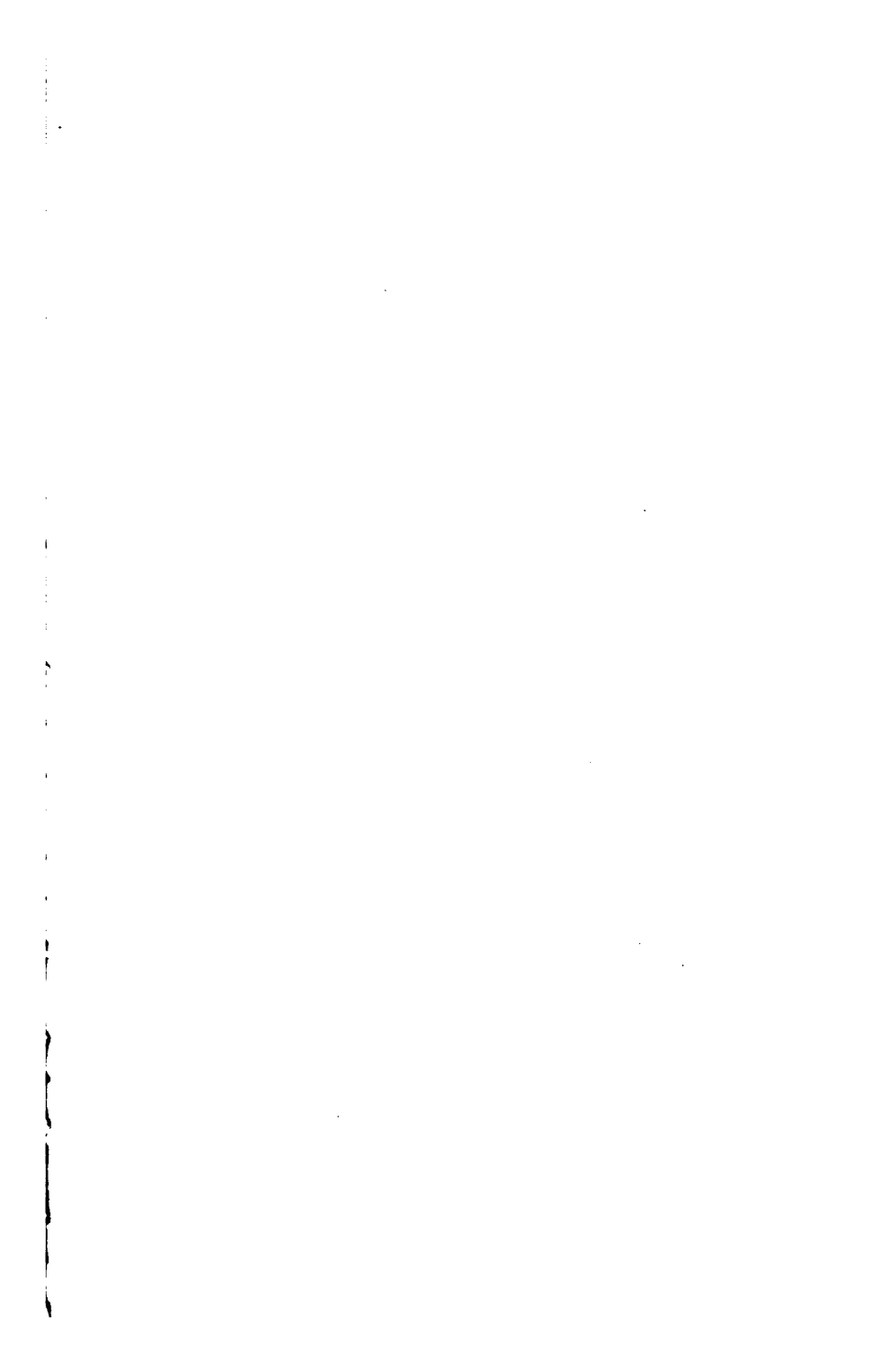


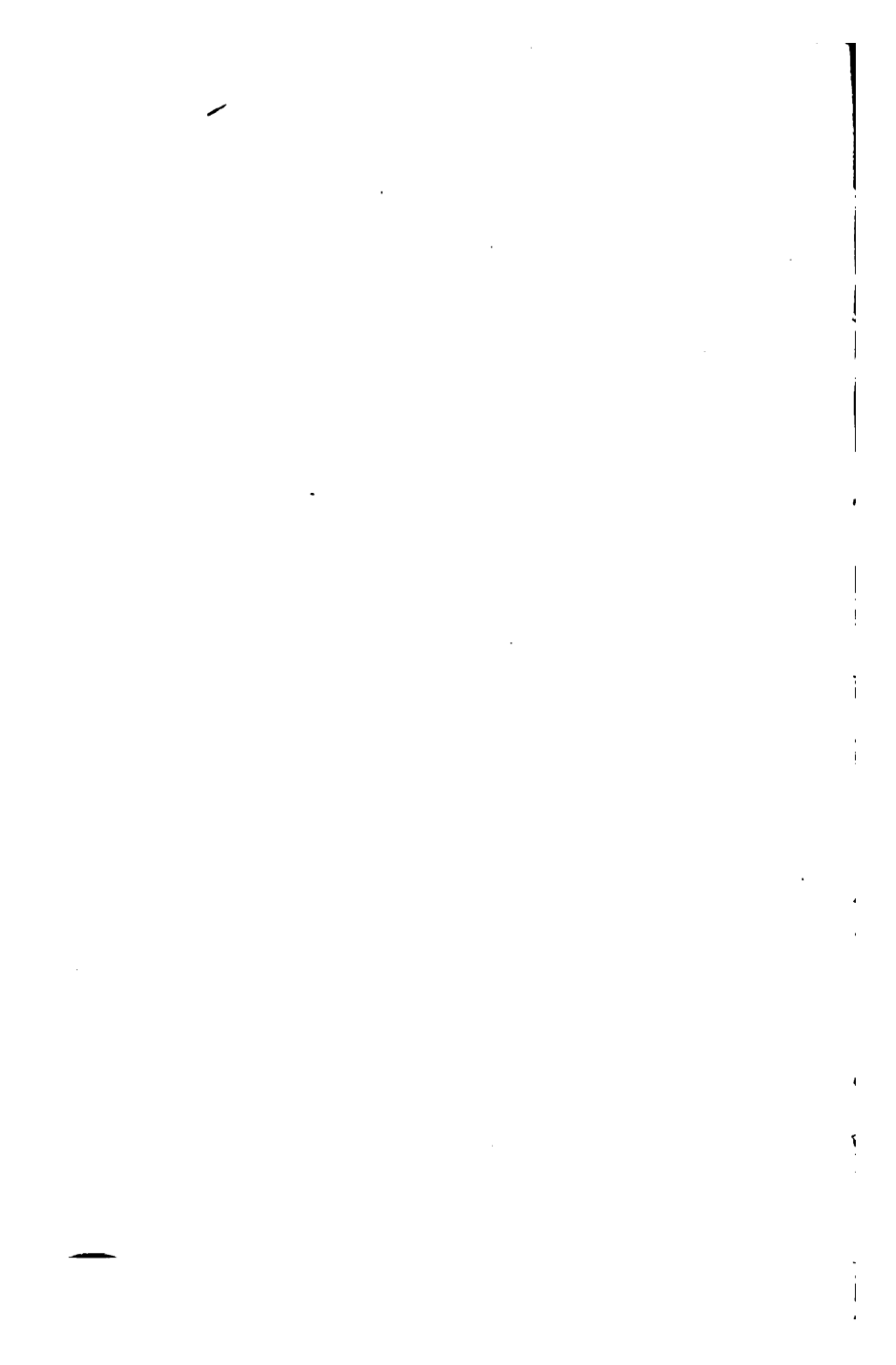
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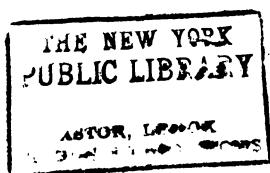
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"The camel, Tempest! The camel!" Dave shouted

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LOST ISLAND

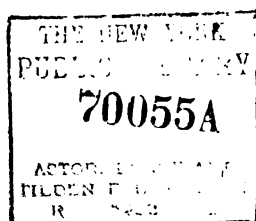
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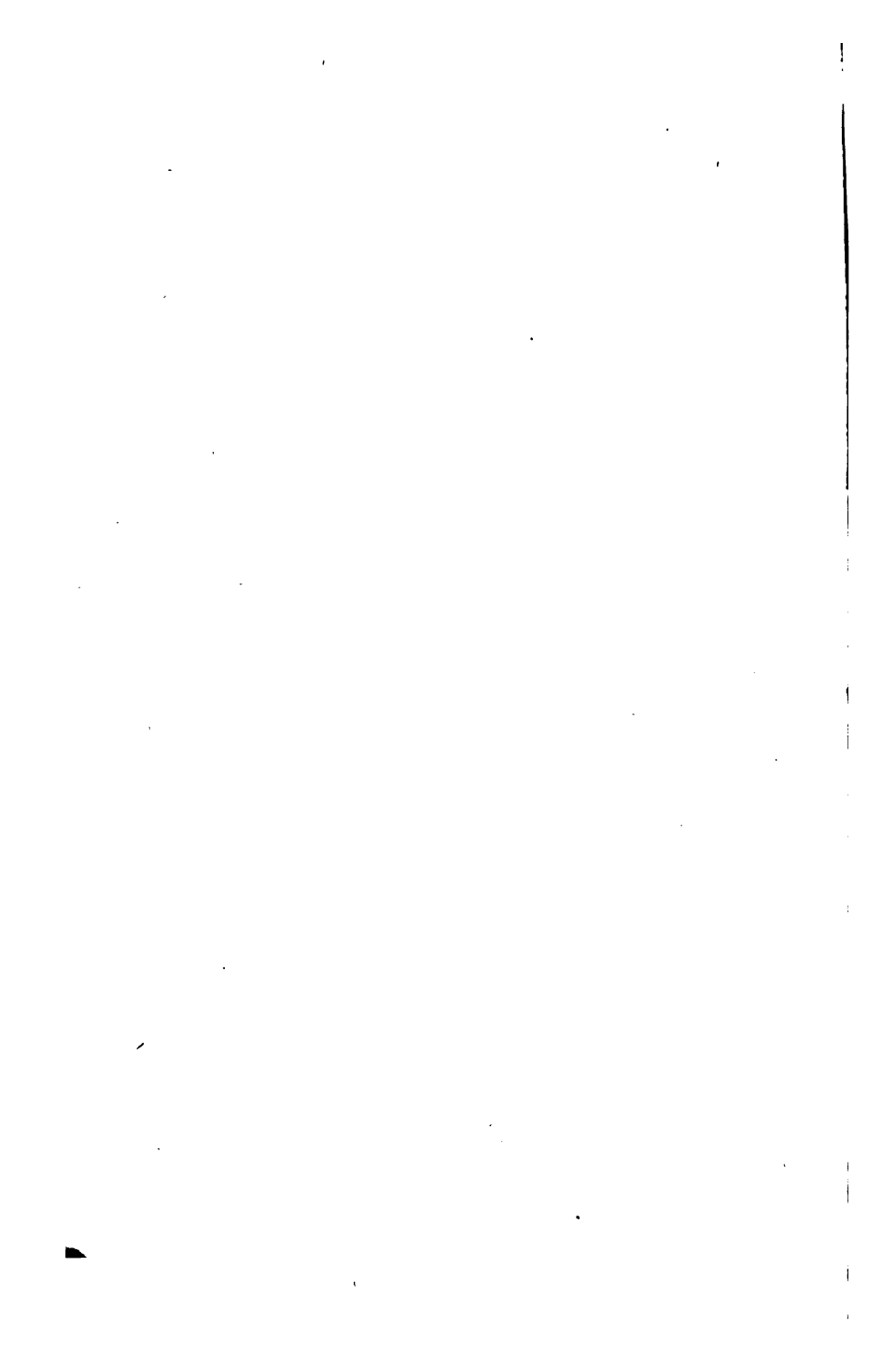
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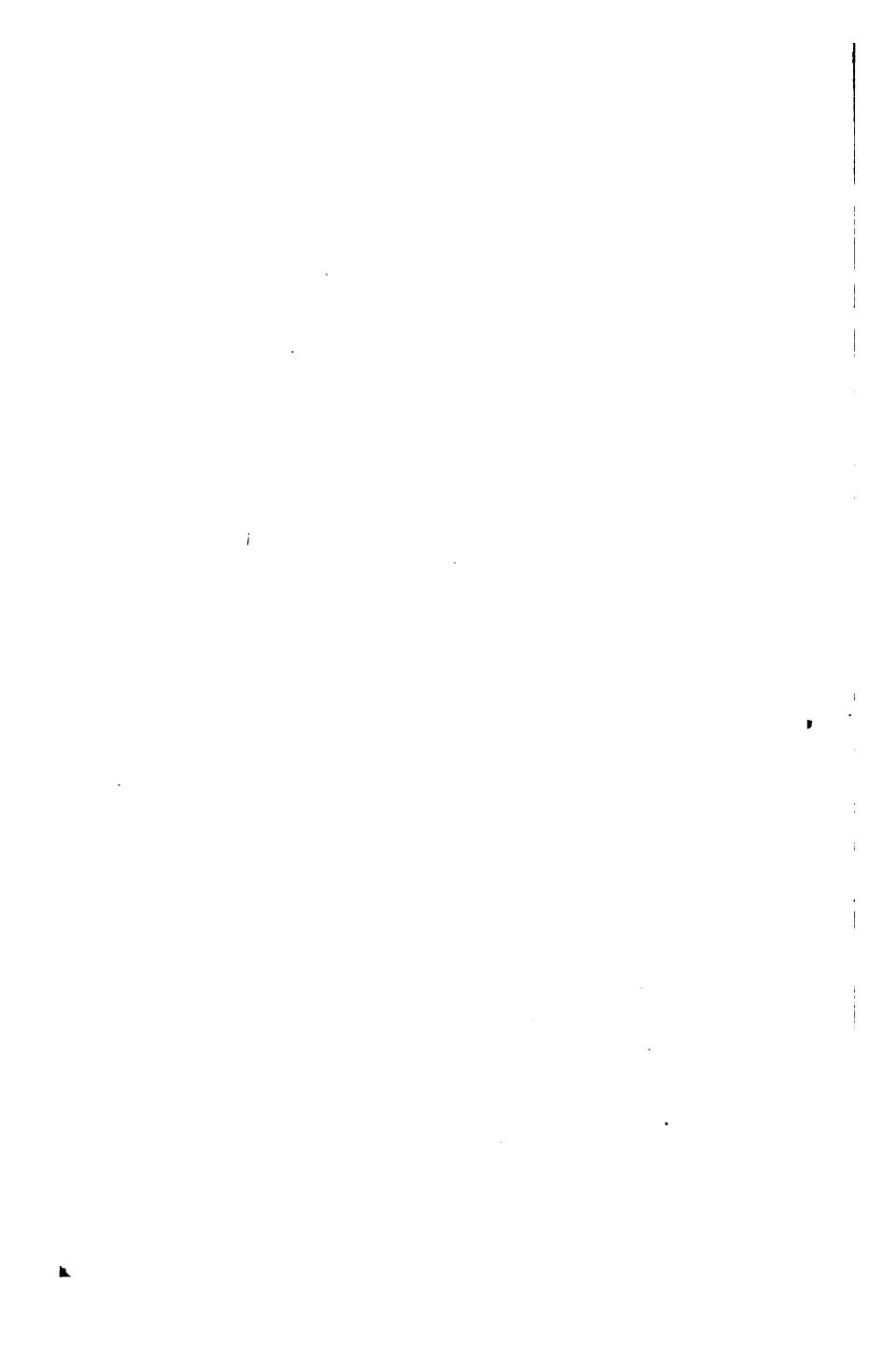
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LOST ISLAND

LOST ISLAND

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH DAVID HALLARD HEARS THE CALL OF
THE SEA

I DARE say you 've seen a lot of strange things in the South Seas," said Dave Hallard, a bit wistfully.

"Aye, there 's queer sights in them latitudes," agreed the old sailor, pausing in his task of slapping paint on the side of the ship and gazing thoughtfully across the sunlit harbor. "Lots an' lots of 'em," he added after a moment as, lighting his pipe again, he went on with his work. "I suppose you 've never been to sea, have you?" he asked, casting a sidelong glance at the boy who for the last half-hour had been perched on the

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string-piece of the wharf, his legs dangling above the oily water.

"Not yet," answered Dave regretfully.

"An' I guess you 're seventeen, eh? Or maybe a bit more."

"Sixteen," the boy replied. He was, however, tall for sixteen, and there was the promise of much strength in his broad shoulders. A keen enthusiasm for outdoor sports had developed his body and, without doubt, fostered the determination apparent in the firm mouth, the square chin, and the steady grey eyes.

"Well, when I was your age," said the mariner, "I was cabin-boy under old Captain Zebalon Pratt. He was one of your old-fashioned Yankee skippers, and no mistake, and many 's the dose of rope's-end I got, my hearty. Barrin' the rope's-end, though, I liked it all well enough. It 's a hard life, but it 's the only life for me. It gets a hold over you, but it ain't a bed of roses at any time. We 've just finished a rough enough

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time this last voyage, after we left Honolulu for home, and I won't say there was n't a while when I'd have given a month's pay to feel solid land under my feet. But it's forgotten now."

"Were you ever shipwrecked?" the boy asked.

"Three times. Once off the coast of China, once in the Mediterranean, and once hard by New Guinea."

He paused for a moment, while allowing his memory to dwell upon those vivid moments.

"I don't know, though," he went on, "that any of them shipwrecks ever proved quite so excitin' as the last shakin' up we had in this steamer. When you get an easterly gale blowin' in that part of the Pacific, it suttinly comes good and hard. We were making a course 'most due sou'-east when the wind hit us. It came sudden, cuttin' slices clean off the surface, and the old ship listed over till I thought she was a goner. Her port rail was right under water, and the big waves

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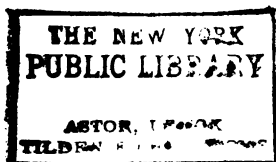
that broke over us sometimes reached half-way up the funnel. One man must have gone overboard at once, and the mate was knocked senseless against a stanchion. He 'd have gone too, but he got entangled in some gear, and after a while we dragged him under shelter.

"It sure was blowin' for about an hour, and then it eased off quick like, but we knew what to expect when it started again. Everything loose had been shot over the side, and one of the boats had been stove in. We just had time to get ready for the next snorter before it arrived, and then the old ship was nearly lifted clean out of water. You 've heard of seas runnin' mountains high, p'raps. Well, them seas was like mountains, and we were slidin' down the sides same as the coasters at Coney, only it did n't cost ten cents a time, and we did n't know exactly what was going to happen when we got to the bottom."

The sailor put down the paint-brush and re-



"Were you ever shipwrecked?" the boy asked



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charged his pipe with great care before continuing:

“Give me an old wind-jammer for weatherin’ a gale. You never know what’s going to happen to these new-fangled steam contraptions. The ship’s engines was ’most shook to pieces after two days of it, and we all made up our minds we’d seen the last of New York or anywhere else on dry land. The ship was leakin’ enough to scare any one, and it was too rough to use the hand-pumps. We’d drifted some distance out of our course between Fanning and Christmas Islands when the current and wind took us under the lee of another island, and that saved us. Before you could say ‘knife’ we had the anchor down and were ridin’ as comfortable and snug as any man could want.

“We sheltered for three days under that bit of a place. As a rule, you don’t get much besides low coral islands in them waters, but there was a hill on this one. I remember that, from where

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we were lyn', part of the island looked a good deal like a camel's back.

"We were anchored off a little lagoon, and one day the captain sees something that might have been a wreck half buried in the sand. When the gale had spent itself he went ashore in a boat, thinkin' p'raps there might be a chance of a bit of salvage. But there was n't. It was an old bark that must have been lost some years ago. We reckoned she 'd struck a reef of rocks outside the lagoon, drifted over them afterwards, and landed inside the cove where we found her. Only the stumps of her masts were left. I remember her name. We could just make it out on a copper plate where the bell had hung. She was the *Hatteras*."

"Had the crew been saved?" Dave asked.

"Bless you, I dunno," replied the mariner. "There 's hundreds and hundreds of ships breakin' to pieces off the track of regular traffic, and only the sea knows what became of the men

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on 'em; and she don't tell. No, siree! she holds her secrets fast."

"But did n't the people on the island know?" the boy queried.

There was a comical look in the old man's eyes as he regarded his questioner.

"Say, sonny," he said, "you don't think there 's trolley-cars runnin' and department stores on every little two-by-four dump in the South Seas?"

"I thought there might be a few natives," Dave suggested.

"Well, sometimes you find a bunch of them stoppin' on an island, but we did n't see anything livin' there except a few turtles and sea-birds that knew nothing and cared less about how the *Hatteras* got there. You never know what luck is comin' your way when you 're a sailor. It might be our turn to get piled up on a rock after we leave here to-night at high water."

Somebody on deck called to the mariner. Dave, with a curious feeling, watched him clamber

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over the side and disappear. At high water the old salt was to begin a new series of adventures, all with the smack of the sea in them. In his imagination the boy depicted the mariner undergoing hairbreadth escapes and encountering perils of every description, all of which he would overcome so that when the ship reached port he could sit contentedly in a swinging cradle, painting the hull, and applying innumerable matches to a most obstinate pipe.

Dave came of sea-going stock, the Hallards having followed the sea for generations. Dave's father created a record in his early manhood by driving a clipper from Hong Kong to San Francisco in thirty-three days; and old Phineas Hallard, David's grandfather, had been a pioneer in the copra trade with the West Indies.

From one window of his home in Brooklyn the boy could obtain a panoramic view of the ceaseless traffic in the harbor to and from New York—big, stately mail-boats with tugs puffing fussily at

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their side; mysterious, bird-like sailing-ships with crowded canvas; strings of barges in tow; rusty and lazy tramp steamers homeward bound after wonderful voyages to foreign lands. The sight of these messengers of the deep stirred something in the blood of Dave Hallard. He liked to go down to the wharf on his way home from school and drift into conversation, just as he had done to-day, with men who had sailed to distant ports. On this occasion he had been lucky. The old mariner with the paint-brush had been full of reminiscences; and for the first time, Dave, as he walked home, felt that the glamour of the sea was something real to him—something that was bound to have a vital influence over him. Hitherto his life had been wrapped up in school, sports, and his home; but now it was dawning on him that there was a great world outside that in which he had moved so far, a world in which he would, sooner or later, take his place. Some day he, too, might stand on a ship scudding before the breeze,

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under the wonderful Southern Cross where flying-fish skimmed the water and turtles lived on desert islands. He threw out his chest a little and sniffed the crisp air of early spring straight from the broad Atlantic. It seemed good. He felt a vague regret that he was not with the old mariner on the tramp steamer, learning the mysteries of sails and halyards and hovering on the brink of great unknown adventures.

Dave was quiet when he entered the house. His Aunt Martha, who had been a mother to him ever since he could remember, glanced at him curiously several times, thinking something was worrying the boy, for he was usually bubbling over with good spirits.

"What 's amiss, Dave?" she asked at last, while preparing supper. "You 're not sick, are you?"

"I 'm all right," he said, coming out of a reverie with a start. "I was only thinking, Aunt Martha,

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what do people do when—when they want to be sailors?”

“For the land’s sake, this boy has got it too!” she exclaimed, with a touch of pathos in her voice.

“All the Hallards go the same way, and there’s no stopping them as soon as they get out of short pants.”

Dave’s thoughts were far away. The sting of salt air on his cheeks that afternoon, and the sailor’s reminiscences, had stirred him strangely. Hitherto he had not been directly thrown into association much with sailors. True, there were in his home a dozen distinctive signs that his father had spent many years at sea—a full-rigged four-master careening over on a painted ocean, under a glass case, in the parlor; two assagais and a knobkerrie picked up at some South African port; a compass and an old brass sextant kept in a sacred place; a pair of powerful binoculars; strangely carved figures which might at one time

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have been idols in some heathenish land. But these relics had been collected years before. Andrew Hallard gave up the sea soon after Dave was born.

"Supper is ready," said Aunt Martha, resignedly. "Go and tell your dad."

Dave obeyed mechanically.

"The sea is calling this boy already," Miss Hallard said a little later as she served their frugal meal. "He's puzzling how to get afloat now."

Captain Hallard cast an uneasy glance at his son. He had always expected this eventually, but somehow the possibility of the wrench had seemed a long way off.

"There's time enough to think about that, lad," he declared; but even as he said it he knew the boy's days ashore must be numbered now. Once, long ago, he, and generations of his men-folk, had passed through the same phase.

Dave was Captain Hallard's only son, and there

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was a strong affinity between them. The man dreaded the moment when his boy must go, only to return occasionally between long voyages, but he knew the power with which the sea must be calling Dave.

There had been a time when a business career had seemed probable for Dave. That was when Andrew Hallard first gave up the sea. He had made a considerable fortune by sea trading and wise investment. Everything appeared rosy in those days, and if Captain Hallard had rested on his laurels, all would have been well. He was a true sailor and knew his work thoroughly, but success had made him ambitious for greater things. The business of underwriting ships is one which needs not only a close knowledge of shipping, but also considerable skill in the world of finance. It appeared, however, to Andrew Hallard to offer excellent opportunities, and he launched forth into it. For a while luck went with him, but one or two of his speculations came

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to grief. In order to recoup himself of these losses he plunged a shade deeper, taking risks about which more experienced men would have hesitated. At this critical moment two vessels were lost, and in order to pay the insurance he had to raise a mortgage on his own property which left him financially crippled. It did not take him long to discover that without the power of money behind him his position in business amounted to nothing, and he had to hunt for the command of another ship. On his first voyage, however, rheumatism, brought on by long exposure in bad weather, left him unfit for the one profession he had at his finger-tips. Then he was compelled to settle down ashore and share his home with his sister Martha.

Aunt Martha had a very small income and few relatives. She was a prim, elderly lady with a profound distrust of anything in the way of speculation. Several times before Andrew Hallard's crash arrived she warned him that a bird in the

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hand was safer than ten in a bush, but when he came back, almost a physical wreck, to his motherless boy, her heart softened, and she threw in her lot with his. It was sometimes a struggle for them to make ends meet, but her brother Andrew had been good to her in his successful days, so it gave her additional pleasure to help him now.

The bitterest blow was when his little estate on Long Island went—the home he had worked for during so many years. It was just the sort of place a sea-captain might picture, during his travels, as that in which he could spend the autumn of his life contentedly. When it was built, and he went to live there, he called the house “Journey’s End.” It was perched high on a cliff, facing the sea he loved, and while he lived there he spent many hours watching the distant ships through a telescope. Once or twice in recent years he had taken Dave with him to look at the old place, drawn to it by happy memories, but the visit always made him unhappy.

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"Journey's End" was now occupied by Stephen Strong, an old friend of Captain Hallard, who had come to the rescue when the mortgage was foreclosed. Mr. Strong was a New Englander, and when the time came for him to take possession he did so regretfully, declaring that at any time the fortunes of the Hallards changed once more he would be willing to leave the house.

"I 'm a wanderer, anyway," he said, "so I guess this won't be the end of my journey. Besides, I was bred and born in Gloucester, and when I drop my anchor the last time it ought to be there. Cheer up, Hallard, you 'll be heaving me out of this place yet."

Mr. Strong often made some similar remark when Captain Hallard revisited the house on the cliff, and Captain Hallard laughed at such cheery optimism, for he knew his days of fortune-hunting were over. Dave, however, was imbued with a youthful notion of retrieving the family fortunes, and he realized that as it must be many

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years before he could obtain command of a ship himself, the sooner he got to work the better. A few days after his encounter with the ancient mariner he spoke to his father on the subject.

"Tush, lad, what 's put such notions into your head?" Andrew Hallard asked, anxious to draw from the boy his real feelings.

"I don't think I should like to be anything but a sailor, Dad," the boy said. Then he told his father of his talk with the old salt. Captain Hallard listened, and nodded. It came to him as an echo of his own boyhood. Thus encouraged, Dave warmed up, and repeated some of the sailor's stories. When he came to the discovery of the *Hatteras* on a desert island his father turned quickly in his chair.

"*Hatteras, Hatteras,*" he repeated, wrinkling his brows. "I seem to remember something about a ship called the *Hatteras*, years ago, but I don't recall exactly what for the moment."

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He drummed his finger-tips on the edge of the chair and looked up at the ceiling.

“Why!” he exclaimed after a pause; “was n’t there a ship called the *Hatteras* disappeared once? I think I ’ve got something about it in my book of newspaper cuttings. Let me see.”

He foraged in a drawer, fished out an old collection of clippings, and turned over the leaves.

CHAPTER II

THE MYSTERY OF THE BARK HATTERAS

“**H**ERE she is,” he said at last. “This can’t be the same *Hatteras* that you ’re talking about though, because they searched everywhere for her at the time.”

Adjusting his glasses, Captain Hallard read:

“A strange mystery of the sea is recalled now that the bark *Hatteras* is definitely given up for lost. Six months have elapsed since she was last heard of in the Pacific Ocean, and the owners have no alternative but to regard her as sunk. The vessel herself was fully insured, but not the cargo, and it now appears that the latter included one small shipment which was of considerable value, consisting of a quantity of platinum. A good deal of money has been spent, since she was first reported missing, in searching for any trace of the *Hatteras*, but no sign of her has been discovered.

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"A curious feature of the story is that no man knows, or ever will know, exactly where this valuable consignment came from originally. Possibly it was mined in New Guinea, where platinum is known to exist, or possibly in some part of Australia, but that must always remain a matter of conjecture.

"About a year ago Messrs. Jacobs & Krantz of San Francisco, dealers in precious metals, received a letter from one Vance Peters, written at Sydney, New South Wales. Peters stated that he had discovered a rich deposit of platinum, and had worked on it for two years until the supply was exhausted. He said he had melted it down into bars, had deposited it in a Sydney bank, and now wanted Jacobs & Krantz to market it for him, as facilities for disposing of it in Sydney were not good.

"The San Francisco firm consented to handle the transaction, and in due course received a letter from Peters announcing that he was sailing from Sydney on the *Hatteras*, bringing the platinum with him. There the known history of the platinum almost ends. After the *Hatteras* put to sea she was spoken twice between Sydney and Honolulu. Then there swept over that part of the Pacific the succession of devastating northeasterly gales which wreaked havoc among shipping there six months ago. Vessels of all kinds were blown far out

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of their course, and many of them were lost. The last heard of the *Hatteras* was a report from the ship *Minerva* that she had passed within a mile of her in the neighbourhood of Fanning Island. The bark was then partly dismasted and flying signals of distress. The *Minerva* herself was in great difficulties, and was unable to go to her assistance. From that moment the *Hatteras* became a thing of mystery. It is probable that she foundered with all hands in water a mile deep. There are many islands, mostly low-lying coral reefs, in that part of the Pacific. In the faint hope that the treasure-ship might have gone on one of these, Messrs. Jacobs & Krantz arranged with a vessel that was due to pass there to explore the region thoroughly, and the captains of other ships were offered a reward for definite news. But nothing has ever been heard of the ill-fated vessel or those who were on her."

While his father was reading the old newspaper cutting Dave Hallard sat motionless, his hands gripping the arms of the chair tightly.

"That sailor told me the *Hatteras* they saw was near Fanning Island, Dad," he said eagerly.

Captain Hallard looked up quickly.

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"That's queer," he said. "I wonder if she could have been the same ship."

"Well, if she was, Dad, and nobody's got that platinum out of her—"

"If," Captain Hallard interrupted, laughing. "I guess there are lots of ifs. To begin with, your sailor probably was spinning a yarn, and even if he did see the old wreck of the *Hatteras*, she must have been nearly smashed to pieces long ago. Everything in her would be washed away by now. Besides, where was this island he saw her on?"

"I remember he mentioned Fanning Island when you read it just now," said Dave, "and besides that he said they were sailing between there and an island called Christmas when they came across the wreck of the *Hatteras*."

"That's a pretty wide field," commented Captain Hallard. "Those two places are hundreds of miles apart, and you might spend a lifetime hunting about there for what you were after."

THE MYSTERY OF THE BARK HATTERAS

"He also said there was a hill," declared Dave, as the ancient mariner's story came back to his memory, "that looked like the back of a camel."

"You 're sure he didn't say a cow, or a rabbit?" Captain Hallard asked jocularly. "I 'm afraid, Dave, he was having fun with you."

"I don't think so," Dave replied quietly. He had the greatest faith in his father's judgment, but on the other hand he had a vivid memory of the old sailor's simple directness.

Aunt Martha, who had been sitting knitting industriously, as usual, throughout the conversation, made no comment, and registered a mental note of the fact that Dave was growing more like his father every day. The Hallards did not have those steady grey eyes for nothing. It had been inflexible devotion to one purpose which enabled the retired sea-captain to amass his original fortune, and Dave was already exhibiting the same capacity for sticking to his guns, whatever object he wished to achieve. And she knew that the

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boy's determination to go to sea would never leave him until the salt water was rolling under him. This new notion that had entered his head, of treasure-ships lying waiting to disgorge their precious stores, would most likely add a romantic tinge to his desire, making certain that still another of the Hallards was to take to the roving life.

A day or two later, after supper, Dave produced a school atlas, and pored over it with a pencil and paper, measuring off distances.

"Dad, how long would it take for a bark to sail a hundred and fifty miles?" he asked.

"About a thousand years if there was n't any wind."

"Yes, but with a fair wind?"

"Oh, maybe a day or two. Why?"

"Then it only takes a day or two to go from Fanning Island to Christmas Island in a bark in a fair wind?" said Dave.

"It depends how long you waste on the way

THE MYSTERY OF THE BARK HATTERAS

picking up that treasure," replied Captain Hallard, with a twinkle in his eye. "Don't you worry, my lad. Hard dollars don't come like that. You 're just as likely to bump up in Broadway against a solid chunk of gold so big that it holds up the traffic as anybody is to rescue a fortune that 's been lost in the sea for years."

"I know that, Dad," Dave agreed. "But it does seem an awful shame that the man who spent two years mining the stuff should never have got here with it safely. I asked Billy Tench yesterday to find out from his father what platinum is worth. Billy's father works in a jewelry store. I wrote down what he said to show you. How much do you guess Mr. Peters would have got for the stuff if he had reached America with it?"

Captain Hallard puffed at his pipe and wrinkled his brows in an effort of mental arithmetic.

"I suppose somewhere between ten and twenty dollars an ounce," he guessed.

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"Wrong," corrected Dave. "At that time it was worth over thirty dollars an ounce."

"Rough luck on Peters," commented Captain Hallard. He knew by bitter experience what it felt like to lose a fortune.

"But that is n't all," Dave went on. "The price of platinum has gone up to three times its old value since then. That means if any one were lucky enough to find the treasure now, it would be worth about a hundred dollars an ounce."

Captain Hallard raised his eyebrows.

"I vote we start an expedition to find treasure-ships, Dave," he said, wincing as his rheumatism gave an extra twinge. "Then we 'll be able to come back and buy Aunt Martha that new coffee-percolator she's set her heart on. Then we might go over to Europe and hunt up some of those Spanish galleons. There were lots of 'em sunk, half full of gold coins. I'm badly in need of a new pipe."

THE MYSTERY OF THE BARK HATTERAS

"Yes, and we 'd buy 'Journey's End' back, eh, Dad?" Dave suggested.

"Aye, lad," his father agreed, with a sigh. The loss of his home on the cliff was still a very sore point to Captain Hallard. "But don't ever get such notions of easy money into your head. You have a lot of hard work to put in at school yet before you earn your first cent."

"How soon can I go to sea?" Dave asked abruptly.

"Not until this time next year," said his father. "I don't suppose you 'll ever rest contentedly until you have tried it out and found that a sailor's life is n't a bit as they say it is in story-books. I went through it. I thought I was going to have a wonderful time when I joined my first ship. She was a square-rigger, of the old-fashioned type. I remember I had a coat with some brass buttons on it, and I had an idea that I should spend most of my time on the poop, or

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the fo'c'sle-head, looking through a long telescope. But they set me on to peeling potatoes, and kept me at it though I was so seasick I did n't care whether I lived or died. Then the mate told me to dress up, as I had to do something special for the captain. I put on my best duds, including the coat with the brass buttons, and they started me on the job of tarring the rigging. By the time I 'd got through with that, and after I 'd upset the tar-bucket when the ship gave an extra hard roll, I was so messed up from head to foot I hardly knew my own name, though I 'd learnt that sailing did n't consist chiefly of looking smart in brass buttons and navigating the ship."

"But you did n't give up the sea for years and years after that, did you?" the boy persisted.

"No, I 'll admit that, though there was many a time I 'd have done 'most anything to get back home and put on some dry clothes. The grub was n't too good, either, in those days, and the

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older hands got the pick of what was going. Ship-owners don't believe in overfeeding their crews. The men might get too fat to shin up the rigging if they had three square meals a day, so they 're given ship's biscuits to keep 'em in condition and cut expenses down."

Dave plied his father with questions about life afloat, and Captain Hallard gave him as accurate a picture as he could of routine on board ship. To the boy it all seemed fascinating, including the hard, dirty work and the "salt horse" which, he gathered, together with the extremely hard biscuits, formed the staple diet on many craft.

The only thing worrying him was that he had to start at high school and wait a whole year before he would be allowed to eat "salt horse" and feel the motion of the boat under him as she nosed her way out of the harbor, past that flashing light in the distance at Sandy Hook, and carried him to those entrancing distant lands of which he had heard so much.

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School seemed a dull affair during the next two months when such radiant possibilities lay in store. Dave went on with his studies, but his heart was not in them. Every day, after dark, he spent hours at the window from which he could see the lights of passing vessels, and in the afternoons he haunted the wharves, where screaming winches were hauling bales and cases from the mysterious depths of different vessels. The smell of tarred ropes became a thing of joy to him, and when, on occasions, the mate or "bo'sun" of some ship invited him on board to look around after they had had a long chat, Dave thrilled with a new delight. The snug cabins and berths, not always as clean or tidy as they might have been, were a source of infinite wonder.

Though he did not realize it, Dave was fanning the flame within him. At home he came out with nautical terms which he had picked up, to the great distress of Aunt Martha, for, to her, it was clearly the beginning of the end. Secretly she

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had always treasured the hope that her brother would put his foot down firmly and prevent Dave from risking his life on the sea, and occasionally, even now, she would have a passage of arms with Captain Hallard on the subject.

“Let the boy have a taste of it,” he always declared. “You would n’t bring ducks up without water, and the Hallards are worse than any ducks I ever knew, only they want salt water. He ’ll go whether I let him or not, so I might just as well let him, when he ’s old enough.”

Aunt Martha bent over her knitting on these occasions, making the needles fly and missing stitches, because you can’t see to knit, even with spectacles, when your eyes are full of tears.

“Don’t worry, Martha dear,” Andrew Hallard said once, when this happened. “He won’t come to any harm, and if I had my time over again, I ’d be a sailor just the same, so we can’t blame him. Now, stop crying. It’s a healthy life at sea, after all; and to listen to you, one would think

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every mariner who left the wharf went straight to Davy Jones's locker as soon as he got into deep water."

Soon after the summer vacation began, Dave stood on one of the wharves within a mile of his home and watched a trim-looking steamer sidle to her berth. She was low in the water with a heavy cargo. Some time after the gangway was let down and traffic on it had started, an undersized youth, whose pockets bulged strangely, strolled casually ashore. He was about Dave's age, had red hair, and an extremely dirty face. Something about the boy attracted Dave's attention. He noticed that the red-headed youth looked quickly to the right and left, and then, dodging behind a truck, began to walk hurriedly away from the ship.

Dave stepped across the wharf so that the owner of the red hair would have to pass close to him. The boy was glancing over his shoulder and nearly bumped into Dave.

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"Hello, kid, which is the way to New York?" he asked jerkily.

"It's miles from here. This is Brooklyn," Dave said.

"Do you know the way around here?" the boy asked. "I want to get out of this quick."

"Come with me," said Dave, growing more interested. He had learned every turn and corner of the docks. Three minutes later they were in a busy street, and the boy seemed to breathe more freely. His face began to wear a triumphant smile.

"That's fine!" he said. "I'll be safe now."

"Safe from what?"

"I've skipped the ship. I was scared to death somebody would spot me. I've got all my things in my pockets."

"What did you skip the ship for?" Dave asked, hugely pleased at being concerned, even in a small way, with a nautical adventure.

"Wanted to see America," responded the

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youth. "Don't you let on that you 've seen me. So long."

A moment later the owner of the red hair and dirty face was swallowed up in Brooklyn, and Dave went back to the steamer with new interest. An idea had occurred to him. It was only a vague idea, but it concerned the fact that he felt perfectly capable of doing anything that red-headed, undersized chap had done on the ship; and moreover, the ship was now short of a boy.

A curious tight feeling gripped him at the throat. For the space of perhaps five minutes he stood still, thinking hard, and then he boldly walked down the gangway.

"Can I see the captain, please?" he said to a tall man who was standing on deck talking to a companion.

"What do you want the captain for?"

"I want to see him on—on business," said Dave.

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The man looked down into the boy's grey eyes which showed neither fear nor disrespect.

"Well, sonny, I'm the captain," he said.

"What is it?"

"I guess you want a boy, sir," said Dave.

"The other one's gone. I'd like his job."

CHAPTER III

OFF TO SEA

“**G**ONE! Gone where?” asked the captain, with a frown of annoyance.

“I met him on the wharf and he said he ’d left the ship, sir,” Dave replied.

Suddenly the captain’s face wore a smile. The situation appeared to amuse him.

“What d’you know about that!” he said, with a deep laugh. “You ’ll get on, son, if you ’re always as smart as this. Come back and talk to me in a week. From what I can see of you, I reckon you ’ll fill the billet, but I ’m too busy to waste time on you now. Come along next Thursday, and then I ’ll run the rule over you.”

Dave’s heart beat a little faster than usual as he walked home. Nothing had been farther from his mind earlier in the day than definitely to ask

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for a job on a vessel. Now he was as good as booked to sail in a week! In the excitement of the moment he had quite forgotten to ask where the ship was bound for. All he knew was her name—the *Pacific Queen*. As a matter of fact, he was not deeply concerned as to her destination. Any point of the compass was equally satisfactory to him. Perhaps he rather favored China or Japan, but any other old place would do nearly as well. He felt supremely happy and much more important than he ever remembered. Although he had not officially "signed on," the big captain with the deep laugh had said he would fill the billet, and Dave was prepared to take the captain's word for it. The only thing that made him thoughtful was the fact that he would have to go without telling his father or Aunt Martha. There did not seem to be any way out of that difficulty. If he told Aunt Martha, she would make a fuss and his father would hear of it, and Dave knew what that would lead to. Captain

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Hallard had definitely said his son was not to go to sea until the following year, and when Captain Hallard said a thing he meant it. Dave weighed the whole situation up carefully on his way home and decided the best thing was to disappear quietly to prevent a scene. He would just leave a note for his dad, explaining matters, and promising to return home immediately he got back to America.

That programme was all right in theory until he reached the house. As soon as he entered the door he felt that Aunt Martha's eyes were on him, and that she somehow knew. As a matter of fact Aunt Martha did glance at him, but not more closely than she always did. He was as dear to her as her own son would have been. David tried to act in a perfectly natural manner, but when a boy has just arranged to go to sea on the impulse of the moment, he would be more than human if he failed to show that something unusual was in the wind.

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"What 's come over the lad?" Aunt Martha exclaimed after a while. "You 're dancing around like a pea in a hot frying pan."

This surprised Dave. He was under the impression that he was exceptionally quiet.

"You 're all excited and worked up," declared Aunt Martha. "I expect you 've been to one of these ball games or watching red Indians at the movies, have n't you?"

"No," replied Dave, subsiding into a chair and making an iron resolution not to move a muscle for five minutes at least.

"Then I guess you 're feverish. Why, I never saw your cheeks so flushed."

Dave stood the ordeal well. He buried himself in a book, pretending to read, but the words danced under his eyes. He, David Hallard, was a sailor at last, or at least as good as a sailor. In seven short days school and Brooklyn would be things of the past. He would be "outward bound." The words had a fine ring to them.

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There was to be no waiting for twelve dreary months.

Dave lay awake many hours that night, and, with the first streaks of dawn, crept quietly down the stairs, for he wanted to set his eyes on the *Pacific Queen* again. He felt an air of proprietorship in regard to the vessel. Also, he half dreaded to find she had disappeared in the night, and it was with positive relief that he saw her lying snugly tied up at her berth.

He had learned in recent months to judge the cut of a vessel, and the *Pacific Queen* looked a trim craft to him. She was a single-screw steel freighter that had not been launched more than three years. No mail-boat that ever tore her way out of New York seemed half so magnificent in Dave's eyes as the *Pacific Queen* lying at her moorings that early summer morning. There was no sign of life on board except a thin stream of smoke from the galley stack, and the boy stood feasting his eyes on his future home for a full

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hour before a healthy appetite sent him hurrying home to see what Aunt Martha had for breakfast.

The problem of what to take on the voyage puzzled him somewhat. There were not many things he could take, as the money-box into which he had been dropping dimes and five-cent pieces for a couple of years contained only a few dollars. A large clasp-knife, of course, must be included. Of that there was no question. Whoever heard of a sailor without a clasp-knife? Dave was not absolutely certain what it was for, but he knew it was indispensable, so he boldly laid out a dollar and a half on a fearsome weapon with a bone handle. Fortunately, he had a new pair of heavy shoes. One problem gave him many uneasy hours. His father had once told him that when the time came for him to go to sea he could have the binoculars that formed one of Captain Hallard's souvenirs of the sea. The clasp-knife was a treasure already, but those binoculars were the crowning point of Dave's de-

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sires. They had cost an awful lot of money at one time and were not a necessary part of a boy's outfit, but Dave felt it would be a great thing to have them with him.

Choosing a suitable opportunity, he asked:

"Dad, do you remember saying I could have your glasses when the time came?"

"Surely," his father agreed, "and I hope you will remember always to treat 'em as carefully as I have done. They 've got fine lenses in them, and I don't know that I ever handled a better pair of binoculars in my life. There's many a sea-captain tramping round the ocean who 'd give a whole lot to own a pair of glasses like them, so you 'll have to be careful or they will get stolen. Not that stealing is common on board ship. It 's the unforgivable sin at sea. I have seen a man thrown overboard and near drowned for taking what was n't his. All the same you 'll have to keep your eyes open, but if you 've still got them when the time comes for you to be pacing the

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bridge they 'll be worth a sight more to you than the junk you can pick up for good money at most stores. When there 's a thick haze and you 're driving down on a vessel that 's blowing her buzzer fit to wake the dead, you can't tell which direction the sound is coming from. The lives of everybody on board may depend on your being able to spot the other boat. That 's when you want a good pair of binoculars to see through."

"Can I use them now just as if they were mine?" Dave put in anxiously. He had a nice sense of honor. Nothing would have induced him to take them on the *Pacific Queen* without a favorable reply to this question.

"Why, I don't see any objection," Captain Hallard replied good-naturedly, puffing away at his pipe. "Only, as I say, take care of them, and mind you don't scratch the lenses. They were given to me nigh on thirty years ago by an old deep-sea pilot once when we were in the North Sea, making Flushing on the Dutch coast. I was

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second mate at the time. It had been blowing a regular gale, and we 'd got to the lightship where the pilot cutter was generally hanging around. Dark! You could n't see your hand before you, away from a lamp; and there was a heavy ground swell running. All of a sudden we saw the flare off the cutter, signalling that a pilot was coming to us. It means fifty dollars at least for a few hours' work, so they 'll board you in a mighty bad sea if their small boat can stand it. Our skipper did n't reckon they could make it, but he sent up a flare in answer, and pretty soon the dory bumped alongside with two men at the oars besides the pilot. I 'd slung a rope ladder over and was standing by. The pilot got ready to catch hold of the ladder when the ship was n't rolling extra hard. The dory was bobbing up and down and I felt kind of nervous for the old man. He had boarded hundreds of ships in the dark, but the sea is a queer thing, my lad. She 's always waiting. You never know when she 's going to get

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you. Just as the pilot was reaching out for the ladder a big wave caught us on the starboard quarter and rolled us right over on top of the dory. It crumpled up like an egg, and I made sure all three men in her must have been killed.

“I gave a yell up to the bridge, bent a line on to a stanchion, took hold of one end of it, and slipped over the side. I could swim quite a bit in those days, but I did n’t fancy paddling around in the North Sea under such conditions without something to hang on to the old ship by. I could n’t see a thing, but presently I touched a man’s head. I got one arm round him and when we were heaved on board we found it was the pilot. He’d got a nasty bump on the forehead, and was dazed for a while, but he came round after the skipper had given him a stiff glass of grog. We never saw anything of the other men. Before we dropped the pilot he gave me these binoculars that he had in his overcoat pocket, saying he ’d made up his mind to retire anyhow, and reckoned

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he could take a hint from the sea as well as any man."

At times Dave felt almost bursting with the desire to tell one of his school friends the wonderful thing that was to happen on the following Thursday, but he kept his own counsel and waited as patiently as he could. On his last night at home he wrote two letters, one to his father and one to Aunt Martha. The first ran:

Dear Dad:

I could n't wait, and I'm going to sea. Please forgive me. I'll take good care of the binoculars and write to you often.

Your loving son,

DAVID.

He propped the two letters up against the clock on the mantelpiece and then went to bed in his own room for the last time, after packing his few possessions in an old suitcase. Dave hardly dared close his eyes lest he should sleep too long. Before it was light he slipped on his clothes.

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The stairs creaked as he walked down them in his stocking-feet, with his shoes in one hand and the suitcase in the other. He dreaded waking either his father or Aunt Martha, and yet had to fight with a desire to say good-by to them. He had to bite his lips hard and a lump came into his throat when he passed his father's door.

The lock and bolt on the front door took an eternity to manipulate in the dark. His fingers seemed to be all thumbs. He had never noticed before how much noise the key made in that lock. He wondered vaguely how long it would be before he turned it again. Quite a lot had to happen before then. The lump in his throat grew bigger. Not until he had closed the door ever so softly, and stood on the path, did he realize exactly how dear home was to him, or what a lot Aunt Martha had done for him in her prim fashion. The great adventure was starting. No, it had actually started! From that moment onwards he was to be a wage-earner and a sailor.

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For three hours Dave waited on the wharf, until there were signs of life on the *Pacific Queen*. When Captain Chisholm turned out of his berth he was told there was a boy waiting to see him.

"A boy!" he said. "What does he want?"

"Says you told him to come, sir. He's been on deck since four o'clock."

"Oh, I know," said the captain. "Send him here."

The master mariner was having breakfast when Dave was ushered in. He had already ascertained that the boat was bound for Auckland, New Zealand, and other Australasian ports.

"So you want to go to sea, eh?" the big man asked, attacking a pile of bacon and eggs.

"Yes, sir," Dave replied.

"Ever been afloat?"

"Not yet, sir."

"What's your name?"

"David Hallard."

"How old?"

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"Sixteen, sir."

"Got a father?"

"Yes, sir."

"What does he say about it?"

"He says I can be a sailor, sir," he answered, after a moment's hesitation. "He was a ship's master, but he 's got rheumatism now."

"Well, you seem a smart enough lad. You 'll have to jump around a bit at sea. We 've no use for lazy folk here. Go and report to Mr. Quick, the first mate. He will tell you what to do. He 's rough and ready, but he knows his business. Don't let him have to tell you twice and you 'll be all right. We sail at noon. Run along now."

Dave found that Mr. Quick was a very different type of man from the captain. He seemed to bark instead of talking, nor did he appear to be in a particularly pleasant frame of mind that morning. He had fiery red hair and piercing eyes. Mr. Quick devoted precisely sixty seconds to the new hand, during which he gave Dave some terse and

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emphatic advice, after which he hustled him off to the galley, where he was placed under the wing of Barnes, the ship's cook.

"Well, and what have they sent to plague the life out of me now?" Barnes asked in a high, squeaky voice. If Dave had not been trying hard to make a good impression on every one he might have laughed, for Barnes had the most comical face he had ever seen. In reality he was good-natured enough, but for some reason he always tried to give the impression that he was cranky and unapproachable, perhaps because people had been taking advantage of his amiability for forty years at sea. His fat cheeks were red, and his eyebrows stood out like two white bushes. In spite of the greeting, Dave liked Barnes instinctively on sight, and grew to like him still more in the course of time; and he is a lucky person who makes a friend of the cook afloat.

"I've come to help you," the boy said. "So far, I only know how to peel potatoes, though."

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"Well, I sha'n't be askin' you to bake doughnuts or fry chickens for the passengers yet a while," the cook growled, "'cause there ain't no passengers this trip, and again there ain't no chickens to fry. Ship's biscuits, cold, with plenty o' weevils in 'em, is all the hands get on this ship week-days. Sundays it 's different. We has to warm the biscuits up into a puddin' for a change."

"Then what do we want a cook for?" asked Dave, with a grin.

"Look here, youngster, I 'll not stand for any impidence," Barnes declared, puffing out his cheeks and doing wonderful things with his bushy eyebrows. "You 'll have a frying-pan about your ears in a brace of shakes. Don't stand there like a dummy! Why don't you get to work? Do you expect me to wash all them dishes?"

Dave whipped off his coat and started on the task with a celerity which brought a grunt of satisfaction from the cook—a sound which Barnes hastily strove to hide with a cough.

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It occurred to the new hand that he might be able to extract some information from the cook.

"Can you tell me what other duties I 'll have on board this boat, Mr. Barnes, besides washing dishes?"

The cook glared at him.

"Not a thing, my son," he said. "It 's one of the rules on this ship that the boy is n't allowed to do anything but wash dishes. When he's got through he has to part his hair in the middle and dine with the skipper—if there is n't some more dishes to wash, which there allus is. What are you pesterin' me with fool questions for, anyhow? Do you take me for the navigatin' officer or only the owner? Reach me that frying-pan down and I 'll belay your ears with it."

Dave promptly obeyed, and got a thump on the shoulders with it for "more impidence." After that, he was kept busy with various duties in the galley until, for the first time in his life, he felt the peculiar vibration of a ship's engines. The

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propeller had begun its endless song of "*chug-chug-a-chug.*"

Another Hallard had started on his first voyage.

"Can I go on deck a few minutes, Mr. Barnes, please?" he asked. The idea of cutting up cabbages while the lights of his home town dropped astern did not appeal to him.

"Why, yes, son," the cook replied, working his eyebrows so ridiculously that the boy had to laugh in spite of the curious feeling it gave him to know that Aunt Martha was probably in tears at the moment and that his dad was possibly watching that very ship from the window upstairs. "Go right along. Don't forget to ask Mr. Quick for a deck-chair and plenty of cushions. You'll need the cushions if Mr. Quick catches you admirin' the scenery."

Dave slipped up the companion-way. Already they were steaming along at seven or eight miles an hour, a thick trail of smoke hanging astern.

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All was hustle and hurry on deck. The boy dodged out of the way of the sailors, and, standing on a coil of rope, watched familiar scenes disappear. It seemed difficult to realize that he was not dreaming. The lump was there in his throat bigger than ever when he went back to the galley, and something in his expression caught the watchful eye of the cook.

"Never mind, laddie," said Barnes. "This is your first trip, is n't it? Left the old folks behind, eh? We 've all been through it. It's a dog's life at sea, but you 'll be back eatin' corn-beef an' cabbage at home afore you know it."

CHAPTER IV

THE DERELICT

THE new hand's sleeping quarters were in the "fo'c'sle," but he did not sleep much the first night, for everything was strange. So far, the ship was very steady, only giving a roll occasionally. When the boy turned out next morning they were far out to sea and running to the south, the coast-line of New Jersey looming up in the distance on the starboard beam.

Dave soon discovered that he was to lead a strenuous existence on board. With only one pair of hands, he was to do all sorts of odd jobs for the cook, help the steward to wait on the captain, who had his meals alone, obey orders from any one who took it into his head to issue commands, and make himself generally useful. He got a good many hints from Barnes when that queer individ-

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ual was in the mood to be communicative, though Dave had to sort out the hints from a maze of contradictory statements.

"It 's a reg'lar dog's life at sea," said the cook, while Dave was stirring a mysterious compound in a large basin. Barnes seemed to have a fondness for that expression. "I dunno why kids like you want to come on a ship. An' yet it 's all right at times, such as when you get ashore. The best part of bein' at sea is goin' ashore, I allus says. Did n't I see you runnin' your legs off for Oleson this morning?" he demanded ferociously, without the slightest warning.

"Who 's Oleson?" Dave asked. He had been performing a variety of duties for so many people.

"Oleson is that great, lumbering, Swedish seaman who looks like a one-eyed mule." Dave recognized the vague description by the fact that one man wore a patch over his left eye.

"Yes, he asked me to—"

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"Never mind what he asked you to do," the cook snapped. "You 've got to learn to look after yourself, kid, or nobody on this ship won't be doin' nothing soon. You 'll be doing it all. Oleson wants a couple of valets to run about after him, and somebody to carry his breakfast to him in the morning so that he can have it in bed nice and comfortable. Don't tell him so or he might screw your neck round five times, but I 'm just puttin' you wise, see? Hi, there!" he added quickly, Dave having stopped stirring to listen. "I 'll break every bone in your body if you spoil that puddin'."

Mr. Quick, who was reputed to have eyes in the back of his head, took no notice of the new hand except to give him an occasional sharp order. Dave, being new to ship's discipline, disliked the chief mate's manner, but made a mental resolve not to incur that officer's wrath. The third day out, however, an incident occurred which made a permanent enemy of Mr. Quick.

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A steady wind had begun to blow, whistling through the rigging and giving the steamer a most unpleasant motion known as the "cork-screw." That is to say, she neither pitched all the time nor rolled all the time, but kept up an aggravating combination of both. Dave was getting rather white in consequence, and did not by any means feel sure of his legs. He had a strong desire to lie down and wait until he got used to the motion, but there were many things for him to do. In the middle of this the steward popped his head into the galley.

"Shake up the skipper's dinner in a hurry," he said. "The old man says he wants it right now. I'm going to fix up the table, so send the kid on with the soup soon as you can."

"Tell the captain to go to Jerusalem," spluttered Barnes, who hated to be hurried. "Reg'lar dog's life, this is. Here, Dave, take this soup along to the steward, and get a move on."

David, anxious to do his best, but feeling more

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shaky than ever, took the plate and hurried, according to instructions. Even without the soup he would have found it most difficult to retain his balance; as it was, he only kept upright by a miracle. His mind was concentrated solely on his task, and there was no reason for him to suppose that Mr. Quick would come around the corner suddenly.

Before the boy had the slightest warning, the apparition of Mr. Quick towered in front of him. Both the mate and the boy were apparently in a hurry. Dave realized what was inevitable a fiftieth part of a second before it happened, but he was utterly powerless to prevent the disaster.

The plate struck Mr. Quick just about on the lowest button of his waistcoat, and Dave, being unable to check himself, followed the plate.

Mr. Quick gave a yell of pain, for the soup, which trickled its greasy course down his trousers, was scalding hot. Dave remembered that

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fact while he was scrambling to his feet with one eye on the mate's red hair, which appeared to bristle and stand erect.

"I'm very sorry, sir," the boy stammered. "The boat swayed just then."

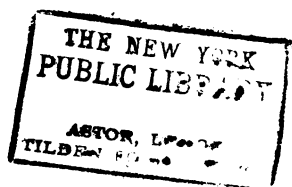
Mr. Quick's arm was raised and an angry light shone in his eyes.

"You lubberly pup!" he bellowed. "I'll teach you better manners than to throw soup over an officer of the ship. She swayed, did she? Then this is where you sway!" and he struck at the boy with a huge fist.

Had the blow landed where Mr. Quick intended it to, Dave would probably have been knocked unconscious, but he dodged just in time, and the mate, still hurling abuse at Dave, and mopping himself down with a handkerchief, turned on his heel and disappeared along the alleyway; while Dave, very crestfallen, went back to the galley for more soup. There more trouble was awaiting him, for Barnes seemed to be in the worst of tem-



"I'm very sorry, sir," the boy stammered



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pers until he learned of the calamity. Then, however, his anger vanished and his fat sides shook with laughter. He did not love the chief mate and rejoiced exceedingly at the latter's discomfiture.

"But take my tip, Dave," he said severely, "and keep out of that man's way after this, or he 'll make things hot for you."

Dave, unfortunately, could not altogether keep out of Mr. Quick's way, though he would have been glad to follow the advice. The mate was of an unforgiving nature and nursed his grievance. He set Dave to all manner of disagreeable tasks, and more than once cuffed him on slight provocation, thereby arousing the intense indignation of Barnes.

"If only I could depend on the steward," the cook said explosively, "I 'd give Mr. Bloomin' Quick something in his dinner that would do his heart good. It 's the likes of him that makes it a dog's life at sea. Say, kid," he went on in

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fiery tones, "I 'll make you eat them potato peel-in's raw if you don't hurry up."

The weather continued rough, and the *Pacific Queen* was nearly a week out of port before Dave began to lose the topsyturvy feeling in his stomach. What with seasickness and Mr. Quick's studied unkindness, he felt exceedingly miserable sometimes, but he kept a stiff upper lip, thereby earning the secret admiration of Barnes, who was a good deal more human than even he suspected himself of being.

When Dave was gaining his sea legs he noticed a ship, hull down, on the port bow and remembered the binoculars, which he usually kept fastened up in his suitcase. Slipping down for them, he returned, and was standing in the well-deck, peering out at the distant vessel, when the skipper passed near.

"Well, sonny, what d'you make of her? Is she a pirate, or what? Those look like good glasses. Let me have a peek through them."

THE DERELICT

The captain took the binoculars, and after studying the ship on the horizon a moment, said:

"These are uncommonly fine glasses. I believe they 're as good as my own, if not better. Whose are they?"

"Mine, sir," replied Dave, with a touch of pride.

"Yours!" said the captain incredulously, glancing down with an air of suspicion at Dave's clothes—an old suit that had grown much the worse for wear with rough work afloat. "Where did you get them?" the big man went on sharply.

Dave flushed, stung by the suggestion conveyed in the captain's words. He was not used to having his honesty questioned.

"They were my father's, sir," he said, unconsciously drawing himself up. "Dad said I might use them. They were given to him by a pilot after Dad had saved his life."

"All right, lad; don't ever get cross with the captain," the big man said, in kindly fashion,

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patting the boy's shoulder. "But take my advice and look after those binoculars in your travels, because they 're worth as much as you 'll earn in a month of Sundays."

Still feeling a little wounded, Dave was returning the glasses to the suitcase, when one of the deck hands informed him that Mr. Quick wanted him immediately and was "raging something 'orrible."

The boy hurried away without locking the case up, and found Mr. Quick had upset a bottle of some evil-smelling liquid over the floor of his cabin. He was wiping it up, fuming, and calling for a bucket of hot water, all at the same time. Dave was fully occupied for ten minutes and then, remembering the glasses, returned to lock the case.

To his dismay they had disappeared. That they had been stolen was obvious. There could be no other explanation. And he had promised his father to take such care of them!

THE DERELICT

In consternation he sought the cook. Barnes grew red with indignation.

"It 's dollars to doughnuts one of them engine-room scum has done it," he declared. "I 'll see into this."

The second engineer was on friendly terms with the cook, and Barnes readily enlisted his sympathy.

"I 'll speak to the chief," he said, "and we 'll make a search."

Making a search, however, was not as easy as it sounded. The only hope was that the thief had not had time to secrete the glasses in one of the many inaccessible nooks with which every ship abounds. Barnes and the second engineer together went through the men's quarters, but without success. Those deck-hands who were off duty—as a class, deck-hands hate a thief on board like poison—offered to join in the search, and soon half a dozen men were rummaging in every hole and corner. Dave's hopes were sinking lower and lower. He was beginning to regard the glasses

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as gone forever, when Barnes started to ferret about in the after wheel-house; and there he came upon them hidden away on the top of a beam.

“You ’re not fit to have a ten-cent spy-glass,” he snorted, glaring at Dave from under his fear-some eyebrows. “In my locker they ’ll stay now till we finish the trip, except when I take ’em out to look for your brains. If I could find the scum that swiped ’em I ’d make chop suey of him, to feed Mr. Quick with. Just about the sort of diet to suit him.”

“Hello, what ’s the cap’n up to?” he went on suddenly. “If he is n’t turning off his course, I ’m a Dutchman.”

Going to the side of the boat he saw they were heading directly for a steamer which lay with a heavy list, perhaps five miles away. No smoke emerged from her funnel. Adjusting the glasses, the cook examined the craft for a while.

“By jiminy!” he exclaimed. “If she ain’t a derelict, I ’ll eat my hat.”

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH THE PACIFIC QUEEN LOSES A PRIZE

"**A** DERELICT?" Dave said, not quite sure what a derelict was. "Does n't that mean a—"

"A derelict, my son," said Barnes, "is the sort of thing a cap'n spends all his life lookin' for, but most generally he does n't find it; and even when he finds it, it might be lucky and it might be powerful unlucky. If the old man has a hoo-doo, he 'll either find the derelict in the dark by punching bow on into it, or the derelict won't be worth the trouble of takin' to port. But if the skipper who runs across it is one of them people that can't go wrong, he 'll be able to tow the thing into port and live happy ever after on what he gets out of the salvage."

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Dave, consumed with curiosity, held out his hand for the glasses.

"Away, child, away," commanded the cook with his eyes still glued to them. "Here is work for men, not infants. A two-thousand-ton steamer, as I live. We'll all have rings on our fingers and bells on our toes after this, for the cap'n doesn't get all the salvage money. I dunno what share the cook gets, eggactly, but it ought to be about half, I reckon. You'll pick up a few hundred dollars too, kid, maybe, though I'm sure you don't deserve it. Here, take a squint through these binoculars; though you don't deserve that, either."

Dave, rapidly growing more excited as they ran nearer the vessel, tried to discern some sign of life on board her, but could not. He did not understand quite what the cook meant about salvage, though it sounded good.

The engine-room telegraph rang, and the *Pacific Queen* slowed down. The order came from the

THE PACIFIC QUEEN LOSES A PRIZE

bridge for a boat to be swung out. Mr. Quick, hustling a crew into her, took charge and put off to the other vessel. Everybody waited impatiently for their return. The ship bobbing up and down, a hundred yards away, had evidently encountered trouble of some sort. Her bows were dangerously low in the water, as if the forward compartments were flooded, and there was a list which made one think she was going to topple over any minute. A number of plates were stove in, showing she had hit something with tremendous force.

The boarding party remained away half an hour, and on his return the chief mate reported that the vessel was the *Miriam*, of Boston, apparently laden with a general cargo. She was deserted and sinking. The forward hold and engine-room were full of water, and he thought that only the bulkheads holding out were saving her. Once the pressure of water broke those down, she would sink.

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"She's been worth a power of money, Mr. Quick," commented Captain Chisholm, "to say nothing of the cargo in her. I guess I'll just slip over myself and see what sort of a chance there is of doing anything with her. She's been in collision during a gale, and the boat that hit her probably took the men off. We're within twenty-four hours' run of Charleston. A salvage job like this would just tickle me to death. If it can possibly be done, Mr. Mate, I'm going to try it."

The captain's inspection of the derelict was not so lengthy.

"There's a sporting chance of getting her into dock," he announced as he climbed back onto the *Pacific Queen*, "but there is n't a minute to lose. We must get the pumps to work immediately. It will be tricky work, because she may sink like a stone when she does go. Now, Mr. Quick, get that new manila hawser bent on to her, and look alive there. You'll want a dozen men on her. Better take only volunteers, as it's risky."

THE PACIFIC QUEEN LOSES A PRIZE

Volunteers were ready enough. Dave moved forward to join them, but Barnes pulled him back by the ear.

“That ’s work for men, not babies, did n’t I tell you?” he said. “Besides, who d’you s’pose is going to wash the dishes on this packet if you go and get drowned? It ’s no use me askin’ the cap’n to do it, and I ’m sure I won’t. Yon is a death-trap, lad. It ’s a desperate chance to make big money, and, mark my words, they ’ll hang on to the last minute. We ’ll get our share of the salvage money just the same, so stop where you are. Blow you, anyway; you ’re more trouble than you ’re worth!”

In the next few minutes Dave learnt what real hustling at sea was.

Mr. Quick knew the art of driving men in an emergency, and in an incredibly short time the derelict was pulling heavily behind the *Pacific Queen* at the end of the long hawser, and looking strangely awkward with her heavy list. Mr.

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Quick's task was a formidable one, but he set about it with grim determination, for the prize was one well worth having. There was a ground swell running, but no water was coming inboard; so after having hand pumps rigged up and setting four men to work at top speed on these, he had the hatches ripped off. As he had surmised, the cargo had shifted badly, and that was what made her lean over so perilously. Bales, boxes, and merchandise of all kinds were lying in indescribable confusion, and it was a Herculean task to get the hold anything like ship-shape without the aid of steam-winches. Mr. Quick, however, threw off his coat and worked as hard as any of the men. The derelict was not in imminent danger of turning turtle so long as the sea did not grow worse, but there was always the danger of a strong wind getting up suddenly.

With aching backs, fingers lacerated by frenzied tugging at the jumbled cargo, and perspiration

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pouring off them, the men toiled at their task without a break all day, and Mr. Quick did not call them off until there was an appreciable difference in the way the boat was riding in the water. The men at the pumps, however, worked in vain. Thousands of gallons of water gushed out of the hold for'ard without raising the bow an inch in the sea. It was evident that a hole of considerable size must have been torn in the side of the vessel, through which the water rushed as fast as the overtaxed muscles of the seamen pumped it out.

Everybody on the *Pacific Queen* was agog with excitement, casting many an anxious glance back at the precious prize.

"Quick ain't giving them men a picnic; no, sir!" Barnes said to Dave. "They 'll be 'most dead by the time we get to port. That mate has n't had a proper chance to let off steam in months, and my name is n't Bill Barnes if he does n't enjoy it

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more 'n a big-league baseball game. That man ain't got no heart. He 's just made up of vinegar and guncotton."

It was true that Mr. Quick was getting the last ounce out of the men, and the pumping went on incessantly. There was always the bare chance that they were lightening the derelict a trifle, and the mate did not like to think of the tremendous strain those bulkheads were standing. Every hour, though, brought them miles nearer Charleston.

When night had fallen Barnes stood at the stern of the *Pacific Queen*, surveying the lurching light which alone showed that the stricken craft was still above water.

"This is where I quit cookin' puddin's for a bunch of sailors," he said to Dave. "It 's more 'n I ever hoped for to come my way, is pickin' up two hundred feet or so of a steamer without even a canary on board. D 'you know what I 'm going

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to do with my share, kid? I 'm going to found a home for tired sea-cooks. Yes, sir. That 's what I 'm going to do. There 's going to be free grub and things, and no man in there will do a stroke of work. Maybe there 'll be a steward engaged. Yes, sir, I 've got his duties figgered out right now. When a tired sea-cook is reclinin' at his ease, with a good cargo of roast beef stowed aboard, running his mind over the days when he had the life plagued out of him afloat, that steward 'll knock at the door soft-like and say it 's time the crew's dinner was ready. Yes, sir. There 'll only be one man in that home for tired sea-cooks, and that 's me. And do you know what I 'll say to the steward? I 'll tell him to tell the crew to go to Jericho.

“Laugh, you little lubber,” he added, glaring at Dave, “or I 'll drop you overboard. What are you going to do with your share, Dave?”

The boy thought for a moment.

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"I'll pay some one to write a book teaching manners to sea-cooks," he said, side-stepping just in time to avoid Barnes's hand.

The coming of darkness had not improved the position. There was an atmosphere of grave anxiety on the *Pacific Queen*, for it needed no very experienced eye to judge that the *Miriam's* chances were, to say the least, slim; and none knew better than Mr. Quick how insecure was the position of the men under him.

Dave slept fitfully, dreaming he was the skipper of a steamer that encountered a whole fleet of derelicts. He had them all tied astern, like a string of barges, reaching for miles. Then his chief engineer came up to report that there was no more coal left on board, and Captain David Hallard was struggling desperately with the problem of what to do, when he awoke.

Through a porthole he saw that the first signs of dawn were visible in the eastern sky. Dressing hastily, he went on deck.

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Oleson and one or two other sailors were hovering round the stern, discussing the *Miriam's* chances of keeping afloat.

"She 'll just about make Charleston," one man said, "but she would n't get much farther."

"I never expected to find her above water this morning," commented another, gloomily.

"Leave that to Quick," said the first sailor. "He knows what he's doing. There 'll be a scramble for that dory they 're trailing astern, though, if she does sink!"

The light was growing rapidly, and Dave could now make out the form of the chief mate. The creak and thud of the pumps came faintly across the heaving water.

Mr. Quick, as a matter of fact, was ill at ease. He had been standing for some time over the flooded hold, listening, and fearing to hear a repetition of an ominous sound—a dull groaning that seemed to come from somewhere underneath him. Using his arms as a semaphore, he sent a

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signal to Captain Chisholm, who had been restlessly pacing the bridge.

"Afraid bulkheads giving way," he signaled. "No lower yet, but stand by ready to let go hawser if necessary!"

The captain frowned as he read the message. It was maddening to have such valuable salvage snatched away when they were getting so near to port. But he was responsible for the lives of the men.

"Don't take chances," he signaled back. "Have dory ready."

Mr. Quick smiled grimly, but no one on the *Pacific Queen* saw that smile. It was not a pleasant sight. He was willing to run the same risk of being drowned as the men, but as chief mate he would draw a large proportion of the salvage money, and for the present he had no intention of giving the order which would send the men into the dory.

Every now and again he went to the side of the

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ship to see if she had settled farther. He was perfectly aware that the noise he had heard indicated something sinister was happening down in the flooded interior of the ship and that the derelict's chances now hung on a single thread. But while that thread held there was a hope of big salvage money.

An hour passed—two hours. Mr. Quick, with every nerve strained to breaking point, felt a peculiar motion of the derelict, and the deck vibrated slightly. Though hard and cruel, he was brave. Very quietly, and still puffing at the stump of a cigar which he had nearly bitten through, he peered again over the side.

For three minutes he remained in that position, staring intently at the water.

Oleson, on the *Pacific Queen*, took the glasses from Dave's hand.

"She's a full foot lower," he said jerkily. "I'll be verree surprised if she keeps up another hour."

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Suddenly the cries of alarmed men on the *Miriam* were heard. A crashing, rumbling noise from under the decks had told them the end had come.

Like a tired thing, the derelict lurched heavily, and before the men on board had time to get half way to the dory, the doomed steamer's bows were in the sea. She canted over, making progress along the deck difficult. Only eight of the crew, besides the mate, had dropped into the small boat, when the stern of the derelict began to rise as her bows went farther downward. To have delayed another second would have meant death for all. With his own hands Mr. Quick cast the painter when the dory was tilted at a perilous angle, and even as the piteous cries of the four men left on board were ringing in their ears, the sailors in the dory bent desperately to their oars in order to avoid the whirlpool which the sinking ship would create on her plunge to the bottom.

Though the muscles in their backs and arms

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cracked under the strain, the men did not succeed in getting far enough away to avoid the eddy.

The instant he noticed what was happening, Captain Chisholm stopped the engines of the *Pacific Queen*.

"Let go that hawser," came the order from the bridge. "Get another boat out quick. Be smart there."

Like lightning the men obeyed. The loss of their prize was forgotten for the moment, for human lives were in peril. There was no time to pick and choose who was to man the second dory. Those near at hand jumped in, Dave among them. Just as they pushed off from the side of the *Pacific Queen* the little craft containing Mr. Quick and eight men was caught by the outside of the whirlpool and began to spin round.

"Easy with your oars, lads," said the bo'sun in charge of the second dory. "We must keep out of that."

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The irresistible suction drew the mate's boat nearer and nearer that swirling centre of the whirlpool in rapidly narrowing circles. The men in her were now struggling frantically against overwhelming odds. It seemed as though nothing could possibly save them from being drawn under, to be shot far down in the track of the *Miriam*.

Dave gripped the gunwale of the boat tightly. He wanted to close his eyes to shut out the impending tragedy. He forgot the mate's brutality. It was agonizing to have to sit still and do nothing while his shipmates were on the verge of death.

CHAPTER VI

BARNES ADVISES AND DAVE RESOLVES

JUST as the spinning dory reached the vortex, a change came over the turbulent water. The fiercest suction seemed to have spent itself. The whirlpool became a dozen smaller eddies, each with its rapidly revolving current, and though the dory danced from one point of danger to another it remained afloat. Loose spars and gear from the derelict began to shoot up to the surface.

"Let her have it now, lads," shouted the bosun. "This 'll be our only chance of getting any one who went down."

A minute later both dorys were over the place where the *Miriam* had sunk, and two unconscious forms were soon lifted out of the water,

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"There 's two more somewhere," Mr. Quick shouted across, as a number of men in each boat began to apply artificial respiration to the half-drowned victims.

Dave, happening to look a little way from the scene of the tragedy, noticed something awash on the surface for a moment.

"There 's a man over there, Mr. Grimes," he yelled to the bo'sun, and the dory was urged across the intervening space.

"Sure enough there is," said Grimes, as they drew near. "You 've got quick eyes, lad. If this chap has any kick left in him he 'll owe his life to you."

The man's form was just sinking again when they got hold of it with a boat hook. He was a deck hand named Hawke, who had gone out of his way on more than one occasion to do an act of kindness to the boy.

For nearly half an hour the dorys cruised about the scene of the disaster, in the hope of picking

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up the remaining member of the crew, but the sea had claimed her toll; and for some days afterward there brooded over the ship an air of gloom, the missing man having been not only a good sailor but a popular comrade.

The rest of the voyage, until they made their first stop, at New Orleans, was uneventful. Dave was bitterly disappointed to find that, as they were only to remain in port a few hours, nobody was allowed ashore, and he left the gate of Louisiana with only a confused memory of docks. The weather remained favourable in the Gulf and the Caribbean Sea; and the boy settled down to ship's routine during the long run to Cape Horn, where the *Pacific Queen* ran into a furious gale, which battered her for four days. It was Dave's first experience of really bad weather, and with it came more seasickness, for the ship sometimes lay over at an angle of forty-five degrees, or seemed to be trying to stand on her nose as she slid down the mountainous seas. Green waves

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were shipped, but little damage was done, everything movable having been securely lashed.

The cook had a miraculous faculty of keeping on his feet and manipulating dishes and pans when by all known laws of gravitation he should have been sprawling. The first time Dave was jerked off his legs by a violent roll of the ship Barnes hurled a stream of invective at him, performing wondrous gymnastics with his bushy eyebrows and balancing a stew-pan on the galley stove the while.

"Do you want me to hold you up," he fumed, "as well as do all the work in this galley? This comes of goin' to sea with babies! It's a cradle you ought to have. Me and the mate will take turns rockin' you to sleep. I'd never have come aboard this packet if I'd known you'd be—Come here," he added, softening suddenly, noticing a red stain on Dave's shirt-sleeve. "You're an idiot, that's what you are. Why didn't you tell me you'd hurt yourself?"

BARNES ADVISES AND DAVE RESOLVES

He rolled up the boy's sleeve and found a cut which, while not serious, was causing considerable pain. With a tenderness that even Dave had not suspected Barnes capable of, the cook bathed and bandaged it, leaving the dinner to take care of itself until he had finished.

"Allus keep the dirt out of a cut, kid," he said, "if you haven't got brains enough to keep out of cutting yourself, which you haven't."

As that day wore on the sea grew worse, and Barnes quietly took on to his own shoulders a good many of the boy's duties, for in spite of his incessant, vitriolic grumbling, he knew well enough that Dave was a willing worker, and an exceptionally useful one considering that he was a "first tripper." Moreover it was only with difficulty now, in spite of his many years of experience, that Barnes could move about while the ship was playing such antics.

"You'd better turn in, youngster," he said

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during the evening. "There 's nothing much for you to do."

"Thanks, Mr. Barnes," Dave said, limply, profoundly grateful for the chance of getting to his bunk. He was making his way for'ard and feeling extremely sick, when he encountered Mr. Quick. The wild sea had aroused all the man-driving quality in the mate, who promptly put the lad to cleaning the chain-locker, which happened to be the most disagreeable task he could think of at the moment.

David Hallard came of stubborn stock, and the situation had to be pretty desperate for him to admit to himself that he was beaten, but by the time he was able to crawl into his berth he had a craving to be home, in his own bed, in the house that did not sway and try to turn somersaults, and where there were no chain-lockers. It was the worst hour of the gale, and Dave, though not actually frightened, was more than a little awed. Added to that, his arm hurt a good deal. And

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besides the seasickness, which alone was enough to make him intensely miserable, he had the recent memory of Mr. Quick's deliberate unkindness.

The rolling of the steamer kept him awake for hours, during which he made a grim resolution. After that his mind became easier and he dropped off to sleep.

Next morning, to his great joy, the boy found the gale had almost abated, and though a heavy sea was still running, the ship was riding much more easily. His resolution involved one point which puzzled him, and after a while he decided to consult the cook.

"I want to ask your advice, Mr. Barnes," he said. "I 've made up my mind to do something."

"What d' you take me for?" snapped Barnes, bustling about the galley. "Do I look like a walkin' encyclopedia? I'm too busy to fiddle about with kids, anyway."

The boy did not answer but went on steadily with his work.

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Barnes continued to bustle, making perhaps a trifle more noise than was absolutely necessary with his pans, and glancing occasionally in the direction of his youthful assistant. At last he coughed awkwardly.

"What 's worryin' you, Dave?" he asked, puffing out his red cheeks. He liked the boy more than he was aware of, and took a fatherly pride in giving him advice.

"Oh, only this, I 've decided to leave the ship when we get to Auckland."

Barnes stared and blinked his queer-looking eyes.

"Pity to do that," he said. "By rights you ought to take the ship with you. Is n't the steam heat to your satisfaction, or is it 'cos you have n't got a private bath-room?"

Dave knew Barnes well enough by now to ignore his sarcasm.

"I 'll be real sorry to go and leave you, Mr. Barnes," the lad went on, "but Mr. Quick has

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never forgotten me upsetting that soup over his legs, and he 's got it in for me."

"I know," the cook said. "That 's one of his playful little habits. It 's the vinegar in him. But don't forget, sonny, you might go further an' fare worse."

"Maybe," Dave agreed ruefully, "but if I have my way, I 'll try to be under a mate whose legs I have n't upset hot soup over. Here is what I want to know, though. This boat goes on to Australian ports and the crew are paid off at Brisbane, are n't they?"

"If we ever get there."

"Well, how can I get my pay at Auckland?"

"You want some new clothes, don't you?" Barnes said. "There 's nothing in the slop-chest for kids. I 'll put in a word for you, and they 'll advance you as much money as you 've earned up to the time we hit New Zealand."

This relieved Dave's mind considerably, 'because all the cash he possessed was one dime, one

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nickel and four cents ; and though he had sufficient confidence to leave the ship at Auckland and find another berth, he very naturally disliked the notion of finding himself in a strange land, many thousands of miles from Aunt Martha's flap-jacks, with a large appetite and only nineteen cents in his pocket.

Realizing that the more he knew about his new profession the more easily he would be likely to obtain another ship in New Zealand, Dave learnt all he could during the next few weeks, and here he found a valuable tutor in Hawke. The sailor spent many hours of his watch below teaching the boy some of the simpler arts of his craft, including splicing and the tying of those baffling knots which form such an important part of a nautical education. Hawke would also have pressed some of his possessions on Dave as a mark of gratitude for what the boy had done when he was in the water, but these Dave firmly refused, accepting only Hawke's clasp knife as a souvenir.

BARNES ADVISES AND DAVE RESOLVES

Very little occurred to relieve the monotony of the voyage through the Southern Pacific. Dave, however, had not been at sea long enough to get over the novelty of it all. They had left Cape Horn about four thousand miles astern when the look-out one day reported a sail on the port bow. An hour later Captain Chisholm altered his course, observing that the ship was flying a signal for assistance. As the *Pacific Queen* drew near it was seen that the distressed vessel was a bark named the *Polly E. Perkins*, with every stitch of canvas set. There was very little wind and the sails flapped lazily. The *Polly E. Perkins* reported that she had been nearly two months beating her way from New Zealand against adverse winds, and was now running out of water. The crew was already on short rations. Captain Chisholm sent a supply of the precious liquid and then, on learning that he could render no further assistance, steamed once more westward, leaving the bark to resume her trying trip.

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"Take my tip and never sign on an old wind-jammer," Barnes said to Dave as the other vessel dropped astern. "It's a dog's life on a steamer, anyway, but I'd hate to tell you what it's like on them floatin' coffins."

Dave smiled, remembering that the old mariner with the paint brush at Brooklyn had spoken disparagingly of the "new-fangled steam contraptions."

"Hang you for a lubber," spluttered the cook, "laughin' at me that's old enough to be teaching your grandfather. If you don't hop off this ship when we touch Auckland I'll report you to the cap'n and have you fired for impidence."

"I was only thinking of another sea-going man, older than you, who said he preferred sailing craft," said Dave, whereupon the cook proceeded to tell some horrifying stories of wind-jammers that had drifted into that strange region known as the Sargasso Sea and remained there helpless for years until the starving crew fought among

BARNES ADVISES AND DAVE RESOLVES
one another, even for the rats in the hold, before
they perished miserably.

"But if they all died how do you know they
fought for the rats?" Dave asked.

"The cap'n has to enter such things in the log,"
replied Barnes acidly, determined not to be
beaten. "I remember the time, when I was a
youngster at sea, when people who asked half as
many silly questions as you do would have been
put in irons and fed on salt water."

As the *Pacific Queen* neared Auckland, Dave
wound up a long letter which he had been writing
to his father, bit by bit, ever since he left Brook-
lyn. It was characteristic of the lad that he said
very little of such hardships as he had encoun-
tered. He explained that he was going to join
another ship, and added hopefully that he would
find one homeward bound if possible, little dream-
ing of the strange adventures that were before
him ere he could cross the threshold of his home
again.

CHAPTER VII

THE WRECKING OF THE KINGFISHER

AS soon as the *Pacific Queen* was moored at Auckland, Barnes saw that Dave got most of the money due to him as wages, urging that he had not enough clothes to keep him warm. Barnes did not like to lose the lad, but he had youngsters of his own, and he knew Dave had been submitted to more unkindness than necessary at the hands of the mate.

“Good-bye, kid,” he said, wiping his greasy hand to shake that of the boy. “Heaven knows it ’ll be a stroke of bad luck for any ship’s cook that gets you to help him. I ’m glad to be rid of you. But remember what I ’ve told you. Don’t jump aboard any old tub. You ’re a smart enough youngster except for your lack of brains and your impudence, and you know how to take

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care of yourself a bit better now, but ships is n't all as comfortable as the *Pacific Queen*. I expect I'll be bumping up against you again somewhere or other. Don't sign on to any craft where the crew speak an un-Christian lingo, or they might flay you alive. I learnt my lesson that way on a Portugee boat, afore you were thought of."

Carrying his suitcase, Dave went up the gangway, thrilled at the idea of putting his feet on foreign soil. He spent some hours walking along the wharves, where vessels of all nationalities, rigs, and sizes were lying, each one busily loading or unloading. He did not feel in any hurry. There was more money in his pocket than he had ever possessed at any one time, and it was money of which he was proud, for he had earned it.

Dave felt no compunction about having left the *Pacific Queen*. Mr. Quick did not want him, and he did not want Mr. Quick. Now both parties were satisfied. Barnes was the only person who really might be inconvenienced, and he had said

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he could easily get some one else "more useful and less impident."

After amusing himself by watching the shipping for a while, Dave decided to keep out of the way until the following evening, by which time his old ship would have sailed. Boarding a street car, he travelled at random to another part of the town, where he began to search for a room. Seeing an elderly man digging in a cottage garden, he spoke to him over the fence.

"Can you tell me where I could get a room for a few nights?" the boy asked.

The man straightened his back.

"I don't jest know," he said, surveying Dave, who was wearing his only respectable suit of clothes. "I 'll speak to my missis."

The "missis," a portly soul with a jovial face, came out.

"I 've got an empty room that my son had afore he went up-country," she said. "You can have that if you don't mind roughing it."

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"I 'm used to roughing it, being a sailor," replied Dave, feeling just a little bit important.

"For the land's sake!" the woman exclaimed, scanning him more closely. "I'd never have thought it. You 're only a boy although you are so tanned."

Mrs. Higgins made Dave very comfortable, he having fallen into her good graces at once; and the old people listened with great interest to his story of the voyage, punctuating it with many questions, for they had always been a stay-at-home couple. The boy spent several days with them, being glad of the chance to stretch his legs ashore, and never tired of seeing the strange sights.

Once Mrs. Higgins managed to extract his Brooklyn address from him without arousing his suspicion. In the course of time Aunt Martha received a motherly letter in which she learnt that her Dave was "all well," that he had fallen into good hands during his stay in New Zealand,

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and that all his shirt buttons were put on and his socks mended before he went to sea again.

Dave encountered some disappointment in the matter of ships. Naturally, he hoped to get a vessel bound for either New York or Boston, but as luck would have it the ships seemed to be clearing for nearly every part of the world except those he wanted to reach. The only two steamers bound for New York had full crews, and in his inmost heart the boy was glad, as neither of them looked equal to the *Pacific Queen*. His task involved tramping along miles of wharves and docks, and his reception was not always as pleasant as that accorded to him by Captain Chisholm. He was always civil, though, and consequently got a direct answer to his questions, even though it was sometimes given a little brusquely.

On the fifth day he received a definite offer of a berth on a large English boat bound to Capetown and London, and it was a sore temptation, the vessel being one of the most up-to-date freight-

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ers, of between five and six thousand tons. Dave, however, was strongly opposed to the idea of going so far from home. As it was, he had made a very long trip, and he had a great desire to double back on his tracks if possible, so he declined the job. But after several more days had passed he began to grow anxious for he had spent a good deal of his money on various articles which experience had taught him were necessary. With considerable misgiving he went on board a small tramp, at last, determined to accept any berth that was going, and in a few minutes found himself engaged on the ancient steamer *Kingfisher*, bound for Adelaide and Fremantle, Australia, in the capacity of cook's help and cabin-boy.

Dave bitterly regretted his choice before he had been at sea twenty-four hours. The ship was one of the oldest afloat in those waters, and proportionately dirty. Rats scuttled among the cargo, and even found their way to the crew's quarters. Either because the owners were mean

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about paint, or because the skipper was indifferent, the old *Kingfisher* had a dilapidated appearance, and in anything but the calmest weather she was known pleasantly by the crew as "the submarine," by reason of her trick of digging her nose into the waves instead of riding on top of them.

But bad as her appearance and sailing qualities were, it was her machinery which was worst, and Dave found that MacTavish, her Scottish engineer, never tired of bemoaning his fate in having to drive such "scrap iron." The *Kingfisher* was a much smaller vessel than the one which had carried Dave to New Zealand, and he found that the various officers had a proportionately smaller idea of their own dignity. MacTavish had many chats with the boy, taking a certain amount of interest in him because his own wife was a New York woman. But most of his conversation was about that "rattle-box doon below."

"I only shipped in her for this voyage," he said,

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"and if ever we get back to New Zealand, aboot which I have me doubts, I mean to have a word with them owners for sendin' such a bunch of trouble to sea."

"She seems to be working all right," Dave suggested mildly.

"*Seems to!*" the Scot said in scornful accents. "I s'pose you 're deaf on one side so you canna hear that clackety-clack. It fair gives me tooth-ache to listen to it. Dinna say I told you, but I have my suspicions them engines was once used by Noah in the Ark. They 're worn out, and it passes my wit to know how they hold together. Every bearing is as loose as old age can make it, there is n't a steam pipe that does n't leak, and at night when I turn in I expect to find the whole lot of junk has punched a hole in the bottom of the ship and fallen through by mornin'."

Although Dave guessed much of this was exaggerated, it did not tend to make him feel any happier about his choice of ships.

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"She 's got through all right before," he said.
"Let 's hope she will last out this time."

"Aye, she may," observed the melancholy Scot, "and then again she might n't. You know what happens to the pitcher that goes oftenest to the well. One day this tub is going to attend a funeral, and it 'll be her own. It gives me a pain in the spine to think what may happen if we strike rough weather and she starts kicking up her heels. If that old propeller gets out of the water, with a full head of steam driving it at racing speed, I 'll be wishing myself back in bonnie Scotland."

Dave found that a similar state of dissatisfaction reigned everywhere on board, and the mates accordingly had to employ harsh measures in dealing with the men. The food, too, was far from satisfactory, and Dave had to work incessantly, if not for the cook for one of the mates, if not for one of the mates then for the captain. He was kept running all day and soon began to wish

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he had heeded Barnes's warning that he might go farther and fare worse. He consoled himself with the reflection, however, that he was gaining more experience, continually adding to his stock of learning in nautical matters. Hard work and the life in the pure salt air were keeping him in the pink of condition. His muscles were setting, and he already possessed more strength than the average boy of his age. Being naturally ambitious, he began to study the rudiments of navigation in his few spare moments, and in this the second mate gave him some slight assistance, lending him one or two books to read on the subject. One of his greatest hopes was to be allowed to take a trick at the wheel, but this, of course, was out of the question at present.

In spite of MacTavish's misgivings, the *Kingfisher* chugged her weary way more than a thousand miles to the west, passed through Bass Strait (where Dave got his first glimpse of the coastline of Australia) and finally brought up

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with a wheeze and a cough of her engines at Adelaide. There the ship was tied up for three days, unloading and loading; and on several occasions the boy found time for a run ashore. Before sailing from there he wrote again to his father, stating that he was well and happy, and relating various incidents which he knew would be of interest. He covered a whole sheet in telling of MacTavish and his "bunch of trouble" down below, never dreaming what an important part those old engines were to play in his career.

After casting off at Adelaide, the *Kingfisher* passed Kangaroo Island on her port beam, and entered the vast and stormy bay known as the Great Australian Bight, where great currents meet and where the elements rarely seem to be at rest. For full six hundred miles the *Kingfisher* had to plough her way through a wild sea, and MacTavish's life became a nightmare. Even when he went to his bunk he could not sleep for fear of the man with his hand on the throttle

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allowing the propeller to "race" as the vessel kicked her heels up; and as luck would have it the leaky steam pipes began to bother him more than ever. Twice they had to lay to in the trough of the sea while all hands in the engine room struggled to repair some defect. The captain, who had been in command of the ship for a number of years, apparently took it as a matter of course. A voyage in the *Kingfisher* without some serious engine trouble would have seemed almost unnatural to him.

"My hair 'll be snow white," the chief engineer complained to Dave during a breathing spell on deck. "There 's something uncanny aboot yon machinery. It 's foolin' us all the time. The thing is possessed. It waits patiently until we get one part patched up, before breaking out in a fresh place, but no sooner we 've got her running than she gets up to her old games. I 'm only waitin' for one of the cylinder heads to blow off or the boilers to bust, and then I 'll be able to

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light my pipe in peace and watch the rest of her lie doon and die."

But the boilers held and the cylinders never faltered. Worse trouble was waiting around the corner for the unhappy Scot. Right in the middle of the Bight, when the wind was blowing big guns and giant waves were careering along, the *Kingfisher* gave a plunge which left her propeller in mid air for the space of several seconds before there was time to shut off steam. MacTavish, feeling the vibration, knew what was happening, and burst into a cold perspiration. If it had occurred on any other ship, he would not have been so concerned; but his "rattle-box" was in no condition to stand treatment of that kind. A few hours later his worst fears were realized. An oiler reported that a crack had developed in the main shaft, near the propeller.

The ship was promptly stopped, and MacTavish made a careful inspection of the damage. For once, the captain was deeply concerned. He, too,

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went down into the bottom of the ship, to see how bad the trouble was.

"She 's cracked at a flaw in the steel," Mac-Tavish declared, "and it 's only a question of how much strain is put on her before she rips right off as clean as a carrot. You 'll have to run at half speed, anyway, Cap'n. If you make Fremantle, you 'll be lucky."

For days after that the *Kingfisher* crawled westwards, with the engineers nursing her "scrap iron" jealously. She managed to scrape out of the Bight and was already within a few hundred miles of Fremantle when a southerly gale struck her in all its fury.

Suddenly, while the ship was pitching, she shuddered convulsively. There was a grating noise in the engine-room, and then silence.

The propeller-shaft had parted, and they were at the mercy of the sea. The only thing that was of the slightest assistance was a fore-and-aft sail which had been rigged, but the canvas was rotten,

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and it split from top to bottom in a violent gust.

For the first time in his life Dave was facing real danger.

Helpless as a log, the *Kingfisher* ran before the storm hour after hour. The crew could now do nothing but wait for a possible shifting of the wind. It kept steadily in one quarter, however, and, when darkness fell, the hopes of every one on board fell to zero. Rockets were sent up, but there was no answering signal. All through the night Dave, with the rest of the crew, stood on deck, anxiously looking for something in the nature of a miracle to happen.

Dawn broke after an apparent eternity, only to accentuate the misery of their position. Everywhere the sea was a mass of foam and seething, white-crested waves. Soon the loom of low-lying land ahead became apparent, and toward this they were carried remorselessly. At the end of their cables dangled the two anchors, which, now that the *Kingfisher* was in shallower water, dragged

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and retarded her progress somewhat, but did not hold.

"Stand by the boats," the captain bellowed at last through a megaphone. There were breakers about three cable lengths ahead.

Every man was already wearing a life-belt. The chance of getting ashore, even in the boats, seemed a forlorn one, with such a sea raging.

All waited tensely for the moment when the vessel should strike the ground. Just outside the grasp of the hungry breakers she hit the bottom with a mighty thud which jarred her from stem to stern. The next wave lifted her. Then she struck for the last time, and the days of the old *Kingfisher* were over.

Waves were breaking right over her when the men were struggling to lower the boats. One boat, containing as many of the crew as could scramble into her, capsized instantly, and Dave shuddered as he heard the cries of the doomed men. He was standing at the side of the ship,

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waiting with others for a favorable instant to jump into a boat that danced crazily alongside. For a second the small craft was lifted almost up to the rail, and he made a leap, landing, more by good fortune than anything else, in the middle of the boat just as the men in her began to pull away.

The next ten minutes were thrilling. Dave could not think of them for months afterward without a vivid picture of it all flashing into his brain.

There were more than a dozen sailors huddled together in the dancing craft. Dave never knew the exact number. Far too heavily laden, she stood no chance of reaching shore. Straight at the breakers she went. It was neck or nothing. At the worst, the men in her could only die, but they could die fighting for their lives.

The first wave toyed with the craft, lifting it like a cork before passing on. Twenty feet behind it towered a silent, green wall of water, the

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crest of which was just beginning to topple over with a hissing, ominous sound. Relentlessly it rushed on, and Dave's heart sank, for he believed that his last moment had come.

The boat shot upward and spun round dizzily, half full of water. The boy clutched one of the seats with nerveless fingers. Every second he expected to feel the wave closing over him. Rowing was out of the question. They were at the mercy of the sea. The boat met the next wave broadside on. It came like some devouring monster, eager for its prey. One of the crew, his nerves strung to breaking point, uttered a hoarse cry as the mass of water struck them. The boat turned completely over, and its occupants sank in a smother of foam, many of them to their doom.

Aided by the life-belt he was wearing, the boy struck out, gasping. At one instant he came to the surface and took a choking breath. The next moment another swirling breaker had caught and overwhelmed him again. His mouth, ears, and

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nose were full of water. He was rolling over and over and the last of his strength was fast ebbing away. When his head emerged from the foam the thunder of the surf sounded fainter, as though it were drifting away into the distance. Vaguely he wondered what his dad and Aunt Martha were doing, far away at home; but his thoughts were disconnected. He felt an inclination to sleep, although he was being smothered all the time. If only he could get one more breath!

For a flash he returned fully to consciousness, when a sharp pain shot through his knee as it struck a rock. Then came forgetfulness.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH DAVE FINDS A FRIEND

WHEN the boy opened his eyes again he was lying full length on the sand, some distance above the water's edge. A man was bending over him.

"Where am I?" Dave asked, still dazed.

"Here," the man replied, with a curious smile.

"Where 's here?"

"Where you 've no right to be, judging by the way you and your friends chose to come ashore. Really, you ought all to be drowned."

"I remember now," said Dave. "Are the others all right?"

"Four of them are fit to return to their jolly old families," the man replied. "Don't worry

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about the others till you feel a bit better. Can you stand up?"

Dave tried to get on his legs, but his knee hurt him considerably. He looked at his companion attentively for the first time. The man was shabbily clothed and did not appear to have shaved for days. His hair was crying aloud for the attention of a pair of scissors, and his shoes consisted chiefly of holes and cracks. There was something about his face, however, which was not in keeping with his odd attire, in spite of its unshaven condition. His eyes were clear and intelligent, but they had a lazy look, as though care sat with difficulty on his shoulders. Humorous lines were drawn about the corners of his mouth, which was good-tempered but too easy-going. His tattered clothes were flapping in the wind, wet through.

"You fetched me out of the water?" Dave asked wearily.

"I took that liberty," was the reply. "I

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was n't doing anything else just then, and I kind of guessed you might prefer it that way."

"I 'm ever so grateful," the boy said. "Where are the others?"

"Gone up to the farm," the man replied, waving his arm airily in the direction of some trees. "You had better come along too. You ought to have something hot to drink."

"Was MacTavish saved?" Dave asked.

"If you mean a Scottish gentleman with a fiery light in his eyes, an accent you can cut with a knife, and an infinite flow of language on the subject of some mysterious engines, yes."

"I guess that 's MacTavish," Dave said, unable to resist a smile. "I 'm glad the *Kingfisher* did n't drown him. My name is Hallard—David Hallard, of Brooklyn, New York."

"Glad to know you. I am pleased you called, though the method you adopted of coming ashore has its disadvantages. My name is Bruce Tempest."

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Dave thought his companion's slight accent was familiar.

"Are you an American?" he asked.

"Well, I am in a way. I started out under the Stars and Stripes, but I have been a bit of a wanderer. Since we've got to know one another so well, may I offer you such hospitality as I can in my shack? It's nearer than the farm. Come along, or you'll get cold."

A little way above the rim of the trees Tempest led Dave to a log hut.

"It's my home for the present," he said, thrusting open the door and showing its bare interior. "I'm sorry the piano has been taken away to be tuned, and both the cook and the parlor-maid are having the day off, but I'll have a cup of hot coffee ready for you inside of two shakes. In the meanwhile, slip off those wet things until they're dry and I'll allow you to wear my best trousers. There's only one hole in them, and I mean to mend that some day."

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While he continued to talk in a careless, half-bantering tone, he was busying himself with an oil-stove and "Billie" kettle; and soon a rough-and-ready meal had been prepared. Dave, now rapidly recovering from the effects of his immersion, was beginning to feel ravenous, for nobody on the *Kingfisher* had eaten anything since the previous day. Canned salmon, thick slices of bread and butter, and coffee, set out on an up-turned box innocent of a table-cover, formed the repast, and Bruce Tempest played host politely.

"Do you live here all the time?" Dave asked, looking around at the shack. Besides the box which served as a table, it contained two chairs, one of which had a leg missing. Tempest was sitting on that by the simple process of tilting it backward and putting his feet on a ledge in the wall of the shack. In one corner were a couple of shelves on which stood a frying-pan, cups and saucers, and a few plates, most of them badly chipped. A mattress and bedding in another cor-

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ner virtually completed the inventory in that room. Through an open door the boy saw a second room, as scantily furnished.

"Been here a month, resting," replied Tempest. "I don't think that game knee of yours will carry you very far just now, will it?"

"I must have bumped it pretty hard," said the boy. "It 's swelling."

"Well, this is n't exactly a first-class hotel," Tempest went on, "but I shall be glad to have you stay here till you get on your pins again. Your four companions will probably go on to Albany, and be fed like fighting-cocks by the Mariners' Aid Society, or whatever it 's called. I 'm afraid there is n't much chance of rescuing your kit from the wreck. She 'll break up mighty soon with a sea like this running."

Dave arose and took the binoculars from a capacious pocket which he had torn while jamming them in.

"Glad I saved those," he said, handing them

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over for inspection. "Dad specially told me to take care of them."

"They certainly are too good to lose. Have you been at sea long?"

"Only a few months," the boy explained. "I wanted to get back to America, but this doesn't look much like it, does it?"

"It 's quite a step, so to speak, from here to New York," agreed Tempest, filling his pipe with strong black tobacco and balancing himself precariously on the two back legs of the chair again. "Did you come all the way on that little steamer?"

Dave recounted his adventures, which seemed to interest his companion, who asked several questions which showed that he had an intimate knowledge of ships.

"Have you been a sailor?" the boy asked.

"Sometimes," Tempest replied. "I 've knocked about the world a bit before the mast, though I 'm willing to admit it is more comfortable in the pas-

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sengers' quarters. But funds don't always run to taking a passenger's ticket, and a spell of sailing keeps one in good trim, besides providing the necessary cash for such things as tobacco and having one's trousers pressed. By the way, we ought to do something for your knee. Let's have a squint at it."

Tempest made a careful examination of the damaged limb. The skin was scarcely broken, but the joint was puffed up and beginning to turn blue.

"I 'm no doctor," said Tempest, "but I reckon you 'll be fairly all right in a day or two if you rest it as much as possible. If not, there 's a doctor lives about ten miles away."

"Doctor!" cried Dave. "If he 's ten miles away, that 'll be twenty for the round trip, and I have n't got a red cent."

"That 's all right. He is a particular friend of mine," replied Tempest, "and he just loves to admire the scenery in this neighborhood."

He caught a questioning look in the boy's eyes.

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“Well, he won’t take us for a couple of bloated millionaires, anyway, if he has two eyes in his head,” Tempest went on. “For the present you ’ve got to lie on a mattress outside in the sun and be as comfortable as possible. The weather is beautiful now. It ’s so long since I entertained a guest that I ’m enjoying the novelty of it.”

In spite of the sudden change in his circumstances and the exciting incidents which he had just passed through, Dave felt very peaceful lying there and listening to the easy chatter of his new friend, who had a wonderful fund of tales to tell about many lands. He had drifted almost all over the surface of the globe, picking up a living in various casual ways, from diamond-mining in Kimberley to salmon-fishing for the canneries. He spoke very modestly of what he had done, as though nothing was more natural than to wander off a few thousand miles and take up the threads of life there just as though he had always lived in that particular spot.

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"But have n't you got a home?" David asked, thinking of the cottage at Brooklyn.

"Yes," said Tempest, grinning; "it 's under my hat. The beauty of having a home like that is that you don't have a lot of fuss when the time comes for moving on. My baggage has consisted of a toothbrush and a banjo for years. Now I only have the toothbrush. I had to part with the banjo some time ago, owing to the fact that the landlady of a boarding-house considered it necessary for me to pay my bill. That was in England. It was a wrench, parting from the old banjo, because we 'd had some good times together, especially when we had n't got the price of a ham sandwich for supper. It 's wonderful what power a little music has to soothe the hungry beast in you. I often wonder whether somebody else with a healthy appetite takes that banjo for supper these days."

That night Dave slept for ten solid hours in Tempest's "guest chamber," awakening with a

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delightful sense of freedom. It was a sort of vacation for him, and he was not allowed to do any of the cooking or dish-washing. His knee, however, troubled him a good deal, and after breakfast Tempest went to summon the doctor. He walked all the way there, riding back with the man of medicine in his buggy.

"Nothing broken," was the doctor's verdict, "and if you keep it in a cold compress for a few days, you 'll have it all right again. How did it happen?"

Dave told him.

"Tush, lad, you 're evidently not born to be drowned," said the doctor cheerily as he departed. Tempest followed him outside.

"What do I owe you, Doc?" he asked. "It 's no use your sending the bill on afterward, as this is only our summer residence."

He produced a purse from a pocket, containing a sadly depleted store of coins. The doctor glanced at them.

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"When I take money for patching up a ship-wrecked kid," he said pleasantly, "I 'll change my profession. Good-by. Don't hesitate to call me again if it does n't go on all right."

Under the new treatment, however, Dave's knee rapidly began to grow well, and by the time he could walk comfortably he and Tempest had cemented a warm friendship. Altogether, they spent ten days in the log-cabin. At the end of a week the boy, although he was thoroughly happy, began to realize that it was about time for him to make for the nearest port and find a ship.

"Why hurry?" Tempest protested. "We shall have to get a move on when funds are finished. Besides, we have n't made any plans. Leave it for a day or two."

Toward the end of their stay they lived largely on rabbits, which were plentiful, caught in snares, supplementing these with bread and potatoes bought at the farm.

"Where are you bound for when you leave

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here?" Dave asked when necessity demanded that something must be done.

"Albany, I guess, the same as you," replied Tempest. "One can nearly always get a job on a ship there. I vote we make a start in the morning and take to the road. My automobile is n't running satisfactorily at the moment."

Dave felt real regret in breaking camp, for the simple life they had been leading there appealed to him greatly after many weeks of hard work at sea.

"Some day I'd like to come back and spend another holiday here," he said.

"Rubbish," replied Tempest. "The world's full of places like this if you only take the trouble to find 'em. Don't worry. That's my motto. Take things as they come, and you can't help enjoying yourself. If I had a million dollars for every little camp like that that I've had a good time in, I should be quite rich, but I should n't be nearly as happy, because I'd have to spend most

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of my time wondering how to spend the millions. There's nothing like having an easy conscience and nothing to bother about."

After breakfast they packed up a huge parcel of sandwiches, for it was extremely doubtful where their next meal was to come from, and then set off in quest of further adventure.

CHAPTER IX

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

“**T**HEY can’t call us sundowners, with this grub on board,” Tempest said, shouldering the parcel. “I don’t mind having a lazy time now and again when I ’ve earned it, but no man breathing shall call me a sundowner.”

“What ’s that,” asked Dave, trudging along.

“A sundowner, my son, is a peculiar breed of creature that would as soon fondle a rattlesnake as do a day’s work. He is born tired and never gets over it. He faints right away at the sight of a pick or shovel; and if he should happen to do an honest day’s labor, he talks about it for years afterward. He has reduced the art of dodging work to a science. Most all farms in Australia will give a man a square meal and some sort of

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place to sleep in in return for a few hours' help, but the sundowner is foxy. When he sees a farm on the horizon he lies down and basks till evening. Then, just when it's getting dark and too late for him to be put to anything useful in the fields, he rolls up for free board and lodging."

"Talking of somewhere to sleep," Dave said, "can you tell me where we are likely to spend the night?"

Tempest laughed.

"It's about ten hours too early even to think of that," he said; "and anyway we don't need to worry, or else we sha'n't sleep so well. What's wrong with a hay-stack for a bed? Once you're fast asleep you might be there just as well as in the best bed money can buy."

The two amateur tramps had a total of thirty miles to walk to reach Albany, and more than half that distance had been covered by the time they decided to halt for the night. A barn containing plenty of dry hay stood temptingly near.

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"What could one want better than that?" Tempest asked, after a brief inspection of the place. "There 's no electric light, but one must n't expect too much at the price, and there 's a full moon. Neither of us will need rocking to sleep to-night, and we shall want a good rest, because we have a big walk in front of us to-morrow."

Dave, having grown accustomed to strange sleeping-places, was in a sound slumber five minutes after his head touched the pillow of hay. When Bruce Tempest heard his deep, regular breathing he took his old pipe from a pocket, sat on a fence near, and smoked placidly for half an hour. He always made a point of not smoking in a barn when he was appropriating it for a night's lodging, partly because there was always the danger of losing his lodgings by burning the barn down, and partly because he felt the farmer might appreciate the little act of courtesy if only he knew. As one who had not a care in the world he knocked the ashes from his pipe at last, hummed

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a sailors' ditty, and then strolled to his primitive couch. He, too, was soon in the land of dreams.

The sun was just peeping over the horizon when the two wanderers awoke; and before having breakfast they went down to the adjacent beach for a refreshing plunge into the sea. Afterward they pushed on, covering ten miles before the sun "was over the yard-arm," as Tempest put it, when they fell in with a party of road-menders taking their midday rest. With typical Australian hospitality, the road-menders invited Dave and his companion to join them in their noon meal.

It was evening when the two arrived in Albany, tired, hungry, and with the price of one scant meal in their possession.

"It would be fun if we could both get fixed up on the same boat," Dave suggested. "You're not particular which way you go, are you?"

"North, south, east, or west, will do the same," Tempest replied.

"Well, I'd rather go east," Dave said, "if luck

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will let me. It is n't as though my dad had seen me off and all that sort of thing. I told him when I wrote that I should be back by now, and I guess he 's kind of expecting me. , Goodness only knows when I shall get home again if I have to sign on some ship bound westward from here."

"Don't worry, sonny. Things nearly always pan out right by themselves, as I 've said before. So long as you live clean, pay your way, and can look every man straight in the eyes, there 's hardly a thing in the world that is worth a wrinkle. Besides, if you fuss over every blessed thing that comes along, you 've got no steam left in you when the time comes for you to make a big effort."

"Such as what?" asked Dave, wondering what manner of thing could give Bruce Tempest a wrinkle.

"Oh, I don't know for the minute," the man said. "Just once or twice in everybody's life there comes a time that he thinks it worth while to forge ahead, whatever it costs. It does n't

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need to be something selfish. Some people keep themselves tuned up all the time. I don't. Perhaps I've got too slack," he added ruefully, glancing down at his tattered coat. He was wearing his "best" trousers, having left the other disreputable-looking garments behind when he sallied forth from the log-cabin. "I wonder whether I should have enough pep left in me to make a real effort now if I wanted to. Anyway, there's a chance to get a move on to-night if we want a berth to sleep in."

There were several coastal boats tied up at the various wharves, and Dave and his companion began a systematic search for work. The third vessel they tried wanted hands, but she was bound up the west coast, farther away from America than ever; so they left her, undecided, pending a further search. At last fortune favored them. The *Neptune*, a rusty old tramp, was leaving the following day on a leisurely trip eastward, picking up cargo where she could for any port on the

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way to Sydney; and she could do with a couple more deck-hands. Dave's experience hardly justified him in signing on as a deck hand, but no question was raised as to his age, his build being equal to that of many a boy two years older.

The mate who engaged him asked Dave several questions, which were answered satisfactorily.

"You 're a bit young," the mate said, "but I guess you 'll do." And Dave flushed with pride when he found himself enrolled as an ordinary member of the crew.

It was fortunate that he had spent as much of his time at sea as possible learning the ins and outs of his trade, for this knowledge became of great value to him now. Bruce Tempest, too, gave him some quiet coaching, and after a week as an able-bodied seaman Dave found little difficulty in carrying out the routine duties of a tramp's deck-hand. He was in the watch of Mr. Slazenger, the mate who had engaged him, and when that officer found the boy a hard worker

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and willing to learn, he made allowance for his inexperience.

The *Neptune* made slow headway, but she was a fairly good sea-boat, and Dave enjoyed this ambling trip more than he had being on either of the other vessels. So long as the crew did their work the captain did not interfere with them unduly, though, as one of the older hands explained: "When he do want to put up a kick he wears his heaviest boots."

On more than one occasion the captain, a Queenslander named Phelps, gave Dave a kindly word of encouragement and chatted pleasantly. The boy was coiling a rope when Captain Phelps showed how it could be done more expeditiously.

"Do you come of a sea-going family?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Dave replied. "My father was a ship's master, and so were his brothers."

"Your dad at sea now?"

"No, sir. He 's been retired for a good many

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years. He used to run clippers, chiefly in the North Pacific trade."

"Hallard, Hallard," said the captain, rubbing his chin reflectively. "I seem to remember the name somehow. It's a long time since I traded out of America to China, but the name seems familiar. What is his given name?"

"Andrew."

Suddenly the captain glanced at the boy with a gleam of amusement in his eyes.

"Did you ever hear him speak of a clipper called the *Bessie M. Dobbs*?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Dave. "That was the boat that he made a record run in."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Captain Phelps. "Why, I was in 'Frisco when the *Bessie M. Dobbs* shot through the Golden Gate on her thirty-fifth day out of Hong Kong."

"Thirty-third day, sir," said Dave, never likely to be inaccurate about that little bit of family history.

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"Thirty-third, was it? Well, I know it just beat the record of the schooner *Sierra Nevada* by a day, and there was a lot of talk about it at the time, because it was reckoned that the *Sierra Nevada's* record could never be beaten by a sailing ship. The *Bessie M. Dobbs* nearly had her sticks torn out of her on the way. Captain Hallard only shortened sail once during the whole run across, and that was when she was poking her nose under water. Bless my soul, and here 's his slip of a kid learning sailoring on the old *Neptune*! Well, Captain Hallard would n't remember me, though I was one of those who shook hands with him after he landed, but when you get back home tell him I say he 's got a son who 'll make a sailor."

"Thank you, sir, I will," said Dave, immensely pleased.

During their watch below, Tempest and Dave often had time for a yarn, and sometimes during the hot, moonlight nights they would spend hours

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on deck, chatting, under the wondrous spell of the Southern Cross.

"It is a mystery to me," Tempest said one evening while they were leaning over the rail and watching the antics of a shoal of flying-fish, "how people can spend their lives cooped up in cities and factories, working like slaves to pay big rents and getting mighty little pleasure out of it all, when a life like this is possible. I suppose, really, we can't all go to sea, and lots of folk would think this was rotten compared with an evening in a movie palace, but I know which I like best, yes, siree. Why didn't you wait till your father said you could come, Dave? What was it about the old sea that got you?"

"Don't know," replied Dave reflectively. "It seemed to be growing on me gradually without my knowing it, though of course I always knew I should be a sailor sooner or later. I think what really set me off was talking to an old man who was painting the side of a ship. He yarned for

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about an hour, and after that I did n't feel like waiting much longer."

"Well, was it anything like what the old man said?" Tempest queried.

"I don't remember much of what he did say. One queer thing he told me, though. It was about a derelict they 'd found half buried in the sand on some island in the South Seas. I did n't forget the vessel's name, because it had been called after Cape Hatteras. When I got home I told Dad about it, and he said there was a boat called the *Hatteras* that had been lost years and years ago with a lot of platinum on board."

"Was it the same boat?" Tempest asked, lazily.

"Don't know," said Dave. "It sounded to me as though it might have been, but Dad did n't seem to think so."

"Then your old friend the sailor did n't get the treasure, eh?"

"He did n't know anything about it. You see, his ship was only sheltering off there, and they

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rowed ashore just to have a look at the derelict. Perhaps they would have been a bit keener if only somebody had remembered that there was a lost treasure-ship called the *Hatteras*."

"Did the old man say exactly where it was?"

"No. He just mentioned that they were running between Christmas Island and some other island, when they had to take shelter."

"Well, there 's many a syndicate taken a sporting chance on a thing like that and made a little fortune," Tempest commented. "Now, after your father told you there was a treasure-ship called the *Hatteras*, why did n't you go back and pump the old man to find out the exact bearings of the island?"

"In the first place, as I say, Dad did n't think it was any good after all that time; and in the second place the old man's ship had put to sea again."

"Where to?"

"Don't know. I did n't ask him."

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"Heigh-o," Tempest laughed. "They say opportunity knocks at every man's door once in his life, and it seems to me, David Hallard, that you were n't listening when your turn came. You 've kind of lost that island, eh?"

"But you don't think the stuff would be there, do you?"

"Me? How do I know, laddie? Maybe—and maybe not. Anyway, it is n't any use shedding tears over it now, is it?"

"I never did shed any tears over it," Dave said. "I got excited about it at the time, naturally, not because I wanted the money for myself exactly, but—"

"But what?"

"Well, perhaps it was silly, but it struck me it would be great to find the treasure and fix up my dad again as he was before he lost all he had in New York."

"The spirit is all right," commented Tempest, grinning, "if only you had n't gone and lost your

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island as soon as you 'd found it! Old Man Opportunity does n't usually knock twice at the same man's door, but if ever he does come again, mind you listen with both ears, Dave."

Port after port they called at, once they got through the Bight, and Dave was filled with interest by the busy scenes of dock life. At some places the *Neptune* was only tied up for a few hours while the chattering winches hauled several tons of cargo from her capacious hold: at others they spent several days. Tempest was familiar with most of these ports, and Dave found in him a most entertaining guide when they got the opportunity of stretching their legs ashore.

While off Cape Otway, running towards Melbourne, the *Neptune* encountered one of the great mail boats, with her engines stopped for some trifling repair. The *Neptune's* course took her close to the side of the big ship which towered like a mountain over the wallowing little tramp.

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Dave, having taken a message to the captain, happened to be on the bridge as they ran alongside. Hundreds of passengers leaned over the rail looking at the small steamer, which dipped her flag and received the same polite salutation.

Captain Phelps, recognizing the grey-whiskered skipper of the liner, waved his hand.

"Want a tow?" he called out laughingly.

"Not to-day, thanks," replied the skipper of the liner. "You're a bit too fast for us. Where're you bound?"

"China to Japan with hot water," replied Captain Phelps, as the little *Neptune* waddled out of earshot.

Dave and Tempest had only signed on the tramp for the trip as far as Sydney, and the boy was sorry when the run was drawing to a finish, for the *Neptune* was a comfortable ship, as tramps go, and the weather had been almost perfect.

"I suppose you'll join a vessel bound from Sydney to New York," Tempest said as they sat

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on the hatches, watching the coast of New South Wales slide past.

"I was thinking of it," Dave replied.

"What about a run in one of those trading vessels through the South Sea Islands?" Tempest suggested. "There's nothing like it in the wide world. They poke about buying that dried cocoanut stuff they call copra, and other things, from the natives, going from one island to the other till they get a full cargo. I know the skip-pers of two or three of the ships, and we could be almost certain of getting a berth. Like to come?"

"I'd like to, of course," Dave said. The romance of the South Sea Islands had always appealed to him greatly. "About how long should we be away?"

"Between two and three months, I guess. It depends on what sort of luck the captain has in picking up a cargo."

"I might not get a chance again in years," Dave said thoughtfully. "Perhaps Dad wouldn't

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mind so much. I could be back in Brooklyn before Christmas, anyhow."

"Just as you say, sonny," Tempest observed. "I don't want to upset your plans, but there's the chance staring you in the face, and there's thousands of youngsters would give their ears for one like it."

"I'll go," Dave agreed, unconsciously taking yet another step in the direction Fate was drawing him.

CHAPTER X

CAPTAIN GRUMMITT GETS WET

THE gateway to Sydney, by water, is said to be the most beautiful natural harbor in the world, and Dave leaned over the taffrail spell-bound as the dawn dyed the sea a deep red. The rusty old tramp was only one of a hundred vessels that were threading their way into or out from Australia's chief port. Birdlike sailing craft, crowded with canvas to catch the least puff of wind, drifted along in leisurely fashion; weather-beaten steamers from all parts of the world chugged towards their goal, sometimes ten thousand miles away; and a cloud of sea-birds, among them great fellows whose wing-tips seemed to stretch full five feet apart, crowded round the stern of the *Neptune*.

"Well, my boy, what do you think of Sydney

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harbor?" said a voice at Dave's shoulder. It was Captain Phelps who spoke.

"It 's great, sir," the junior deck-hand replied.

"It is," said the skipper; "but don't you say that to a Melbourne man. They have no harbor to speak of at Melbourne, and the two places are powerfully jealous of one another. Sydney folk always start a conversation with a stranger by saying 'Have you seen our harbor?' and if it happens to be a Melbourne man they 're talking to, he says, 'Nature made your harbor—why don't you build a decent town on it?' All the same, there 's many a time I 've been thankful enough, when running before a snorter, to creep into this refuge, and I dare say the time will come when you 'll do the same after you get command. How are you getting on with your studies, eh? You 've a lot to learn before you can hold a master's certificate, you know."

Dave had kept up his reading until his books were lost on the *Kingfisher*, and he received a

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congratulatory word when he explained to Captain Phelps how far he had progressed.

“That’s the style. Stick to it, youngster,” said the skipper, “and you ’ll be pacing the bridge before long.”

Tempest and Dave had renewed their wardrobe from the slop-chest, and still had enough money to draw in wages to give them time to look about when they got ashore. The first thing they did was to make inquiries about the boat they expected to find running to the South Sea Islands, and here they faced a disappointment. The company had only three vessels engaged in the trade, and they usually left at intervals of about six weeks. Two days before the *Neptune* arrived at Sydney one of the three had sailed, and so Dave and his companion found they would have to spend forty or fifty days ashore waiting for the next one, called the *Manihiki*, to depart. Long before then they would be reduced to their last penny.

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"Well, what do you suggest?" Dave asked.

"It seems to me," Tempest replied, "that we shall be under the painful necessity of working, not being millionaires, but the problem is, at what? Some of the things I have seen men do ashore for a living would certainly not suit my constitution, and I wouldn't recommend them for you."

"We might sign on a coastal boat for a few weeks," Dave suggested.

"Yes, and just when we want to be in Sydney find ourselves in some out-of-the-way hole. You don't know these Australian trading coasters as I do, my son. They go when they want to and get back when they get back if they don't happen to pick up a chance cargo for somewhere else. I know what would be good sport, as I did it myself once, about five years ago."

"What is that?"

"A kangaroo shooting trip. I went into the bush with an old hand at the game, and we had a

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perfectly gorgeous time barring when a snake crept over me while I was sleeping. Nice little fellow he was, all the colors of the rainbow. I could see the colors perfectly, as the moon was shining, and I took particular notice of him because only the previous day I'd had his tribe described to me. The old kangaroo hunter had been saying there was n't a snake in the bush that he really minded except that sort, as once he had a partner who trod on one and tied himself into seventeen different kinds of knots before he died, all in the course of ten minutes."

"Did you get any kangaroos?"

"Lots of 'em, and wallabys and things. We skinned the beasts and hung the pelts on trees in a straight line so that we could find them all again. We were in the bush about two months, and came back with all the skins our pack horses could carry. I'd signed on as a sort of super-cargo for that trip, not being an expert shot, but I got a third of the proceeds, which amounted to

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seventy pounds, or about three hundred and fifty dollars in American money."

"Let's go kangaroo hunting," Dave urged, hugely delighted at the prospect of life in the bush. "I can't shoot, but I can cook finely."

Tempest grinned.

"Sorry to disappoint you," he said. "You tell me where we can put our hands on the price of horses and guns, and enough grub to last a couple of months, and then find a kangaroo hunter who is willing to take us along, and I'll fix the trip up, sure enough."

"Is that all!" Dave said resignedly. "It does look as though we shall have to work. But, I say, why did n't you go with your old partner again?"

"Two reasons," Tempest replied. "First, I know that somewhere in the vast Australian bush that nice, colored little snake is still prowling around if he has n't had a cold or measles or something that stopped him from prowling evermore; and moreover, he has a few million cousins

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and sisters and aunts, and I would n't have one of them crawl over me in the moonlight again for all the kangaroo pelts in the country. I fancied I could feel the knots coming on—all the seventeen different kinds—while he was peeking at me through his nasty little eyes. No, siree, I like snakes—to keep away from me. The other reason why I didn't go back was because my old partner got it into his crazy head to go gold mining, as there was a 'rush' in Western Australia just then, and as he 'd had some luck at it once he thought he would have another try. I never heard how he came out, though, because when I drew what I had coming I sold my horse and took a trip to Ceylon and back on an Orient boat as a passenger, just to see what it felt like to be really respectable again. Heigh-o, I landed back in this very port with exactly one enormous appetite, two white flannel suits, and three Australian pennies; and I had to take to cleaning trolley cars the same afternoon or sleep on a seat in the park."

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"That's a good idea," Dave put in.
"Could n't we do that for the next six weeks?"

"What? Sleep in the park?" Tempest said, aghast.

"No. Clean trolley cars."

"Not on your life," replied Tempest, pulling a wry face. "It's good, honest work, but I'd rather spend the day cleaning out the bilges of ships than cleaning cars. There does n't seem to be any romance about those things. Let's find accommodation for the present, and something will turn up."

They soon found a clean boarding house, not far from the harbor, and most of the next two days was spent in sight-seeing. In the city itself they found more than one opportunity of getting work, but they were not desperately hard up, and Tempest scorned the idea of cleaning out stables, while he positively refused to agree to Dave tackling the job of elevator boy in a hotel.

"How do you think you'll learn sailing by

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shooting up and down an elevator shaft all day?" he asked. "No, my son. Our business is the sea. From now on we 'll haunt the docks till our chance comes. I would rather be tarring the sides of a coal hulk than cleaning out stables."

Work that would meet their requirements, however, was not easy to get. Tempest, rather than go on loafing, started as a "lumper," as the men are called who load and unload ships. The vessel was laden with heavy planks of wood, each of which had to be carried off on the shoulder and deposited on a cart. The work was too hard for Dave to tackle. Tempest was in perfect physical trim, but only an experienced "lumper" can stand heavy beams of timber on his shoulder from morning till night. The pad he wore soon cut through into the flesh, and by noon he had to throw up the job.

"I 'll go back to that when I 'm forced to, and not before," he told Dave, filling his pipe contentedly. "Sailing is sailing, and I don't

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mind anything that comes along to be done, even if the ship is trying to stand on its head in a gale, but I do bar turning myself into a perambulating steam winch."

It was not merely the sheer hard work that Bruce Tempest objected to. There is a traditional feeling among sailors that dock laboring is not their job. Tempest disappeared several evenings in succession, saying he was looking for work. In reality he was earning good money with strenuous labor on those occasions, for funds to keep them going, but it was his whim not to mention that fact to Dave. Although a good many years the lad's senior, he found Dave a congenial companion in many ways, and was looking forward to the trip with him in the South Seas.

They had been in Sydney a week, and Dave and Tempest were walking along the wharves when the boy happened to notice an extremely fat man attempting the somewhat perilous feat of walking across a very narrow gangway to a steam tug.

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The gangway consisted merely of a plank, which had never been intended for traffic. The wind was blowing in violent gusts, and the plank wobbled in alarming fashion when the fat man reached the middle of it. Suddenly either his foot slipped, the wobbling of the plank was too much for him, or a puff of wind upset his balance.

Waving his arms like a windmill, and emitting a hoarse cry of alarm, he toppled over, disappearing into the water.

The whole thing occurred in a few seconds, while Tempest was looking in another direction. With a shout, Dave leaped forward, and arrived at the side of the dock just as the fat man bobbed up to the surface like a very animated cork. He splashed furiously and bellowed, but Dave could see at a glance that the man was not able to swim a stroke.

Without pausing a second, he jumped off the pier, landing within a few feet of the drowning man.

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"Heave a line," he shouted to Tempest; "then I can manage him all right!"

Dave knew better than to let the heavy man in the water clutch him. He took a couple of strokes forward and grabbed the back of the fat man's coat with one hand, keeping himself afloat with the other, while Tempest bounded across the plank on to a tug. In less than half a minute the boy heard a shout from his friend and saw a rope shoot out. He grasped the end of it, and then, taking a firm hold of the fat man's arm, was drawn to the side of a dory.

"Jumping Cæsar!" spluttered the rescued man, when his paw had closed on the "gun'le." "Me, at my time of life, too! Now, young man, I'll trouble you and your friend to heave on me a bit. I'm not so thin as I was. That's better. Phew!"

He sat on a seat in the dory and regarded his saturated figure with a quaint expression.

"Man and boy, I've followed the sea all my

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life," he went on, "and that 's the very first time I 've been overboard. Wait till I climb on board the *Mary Ellen*, and I 'll fire every soul there is on her!"

Two or three faces had appeared over the rail of the tug, but the threat did not seem to create any dismay.

"You lubbers!" exclaimed the fat man, shaking his fist at the faces. "Are ye all fast asleep, or is it that ye don't care if your old skipper goes to Davy Jones's locker? I 'll have ye remember that besides being skipper I 'm part owner of this packet, and I 'll fire every man Jack of ye for leaving it to a baby in long clothes to pull me out."

"We did n't hear nothing, Cap'n. We was all down below," said a voice.

"Well, youngster," said the corpulent skipper amiably, having apparently forgotten his wrath, "I 've got an account to settle with you and your friend. Cap'n Grummitt is n't hauled out of a dock every day of his life. What can I do for ye,

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eh? Come on board, me hearties, and wait till I change, else my wife will be nursing a pneumonia patient. Ye 'd better slip them wet things off, too. There will be something on board for ye to wear till yours dry in the engine-room."

Tempest lit his pipe and smoked placidly while the two were changing.

"Now," said Captain Grummitt, emerging a few moments later in dry garments, "ye can't put thanks in the bank. What d 'ye mean by hanging around my ship, anyway?"

Good humor was now shining in his rubicund countenance.

"Looking for work," Dave said quietly.

"And I don't know that ye deserve it," commented the skipper, "having just done my wife out of her insurance money. Are ye both sailors?"

"Yes."

"Well, if ye fancy the notion of knocking about

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on an old tug where there 's nothing to do, as far as I can make out, but eat and draw your pay, along with the laziest crew that ever drew breath, why don't ye come with me?"

CHAPTER XI

“IF EVER YOU GET THE CHANCE—”

“**T**HANK you very much,” said Dave, by no means inclined to jest at the opportunity in spite of Captain Grummitt’s tone.

In another two minutes the question of wages had been disposed of, and the two wanderers found themselves installed as members of the *Mary Ellen’s* crew, much to their own satisfaction.

The tug was one of a host of craft that spent most of their time prowling about the waters off Sydney, looking for a ship that needed towing to a berth in the vast harbor, seldom being away more than four or five days at a time. There was little or no formality on board. The skipper was as amiable as he was fat, and he did not expect

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the crew to exert themselves unduly when they were afloat, waiting about. Notwithstanding his bulk, however, he became like a live wire when there was a chance of a tow. He was known familiarly as Lightning Grummitt, and had earned the nickname. Not a tug captain in Sydney harbor could hold a candle to him at his business. He seemed to have an uncanny sixth sense which told him a ship in the distance wanted a tug. He had spent the best part of a lifetime running trading-boats in the Pacific, but for the last twenty years had done nothing but towing work where he was now, and it was becoming second nature for him to know the requirements of different vessels. It would often happen that two or more rival tugs would “spot” a ship at the same time, and then an exciting race would start, for one tug is as good as another to the incoming vessel. On those occasions Captain Grummitt would ring down on the engine-room telegraph “Full speed ahead” three times in succession, and the men below were aware

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then that the time had come for them to wake up. Every ounce of steam possible was got up, and the skipper knew by experience that it was unnecessary for him to urge that department on. He knew, too, that he could rely on his deck-hands to do their utmost in an emergency.

The second day out the *Mary Ellen* picked up a schooner that had been beating her way down the coast, and Dave had an opportunity of listening to the brief battle of wits which often takes place between a tug captain and a skipper before the latter definitely agrees to pay a certain price for a tow. During the war of words Captain Grummitt waxed sarcastic and poured out biting comments before a final bargain was struck. Once the hawser was fixed, however, his ruddy face became wreathed in a smile.

"It 's all fish that comes to the net," he said a few moments later to Dave, "but we don't care about getting a haul of this kind"—with a con-

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temptuous bend of the head in the direction of the schooner—“too often. Greeks! They would n’t let you have the peelings from their finger nails if they could help it. Some of ’em seem to think they ’re doing us an honor to tie up behind.”

The tug’s next engagement was to tow barges heavily laden with coal, from one wharf to another, many miles away, after which the captain proceeded to his favorite hunting ground, outside the entrance to the harbor.

The days passed pleasantly enough for Dave, and he found very little to do, as compared with life on tramps. Sometimes, after satisfying himself that the lookout was wide-awake, the skipper would join the rest of the crew in the cozy cabin, and join in telling yarns while smoking fearsome black cigars that seemed to Dave to have an odor of tarred rope.

One evening, when the tug was rolling gently in

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the ground-swell and various reminiscences had been exchanged, the conversation drifted towards pirates of other days and treasure-trove.

"That reminds me," Tempest said, "of a queer bit of news Dave here picked up some time ago in America. Do any of you remember hearing of a treasure-ship called the *Hatteras* being lost in the South Seas years ago?"

"The *Hatteras*," Captain Grummitt repeated slowly, taking the cigar from his mouth and squinting at the swaying lamp overhead. "No, I don't seem to recall it for the minute. What did she have on board?"

"There was nothing special on board," replied Tempest, "except a consignment of platinum belonging to a passenger who had spent a couple of years or so mining it. He was taking the stuff to San Francisco from Sydney."

"Wait a minute," the skipper interrupted, unscrewing the cigar again, pensively. "I seem to have a hazy recollection of something of the sort,

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but it's a good long while ago. What happened to the ship? Wasn't she set on fire, or something?"

"Nobody knows. She just disappeared."

"Oh, yes, that was it! I was confusing her with another craft. The *Hatteras*—let me see now—"

Captain Grummitt scratched his head vigorously, an action which always seemed to assist his memory.

"Blow me if that wasn't the boat there was a reward offered for," he said at length, his mind leaping back over the years. "But I don't just recall if ever she was found."

"Never," said Tempest. "There is n't a man living to-day can say for a fact what happened to her or to any one on board, except perhaps Dave, and what he knows does n't amount to much, but it's curious."

Several pairs of eyes were turned on the boy in surprise.

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"Shiver my timbers!" said Captain Grummitt.
"Have you found her, lad?"

Dave shook his head regretfully, with a smile.

"No such luck," he said, "though Tempest keeps joking with me about it."

"It's no joke, laddie," said Tempest. "It seems to me you got nearer to it than any one else ever did, only you didn't realize it at the time."

"Well, out with it," urged Grummitt. "What happened?"

"As far as we know at present," Tempest explained, "there has only been one bark of that name lost in the South Seas. Dave happened to be talking to an old sailor on the quay at Brooklyn this year, and got wind of a bark called the *Hatteras* that was lying half buried in sand on some island."

"Where?" Captain Grummitt asked, his interest aroused.

"Goodness knows! But wait a minute. The

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old sailor does n't appear to have known, or remembered, that there was anything of value on the *Hatteras*, but as soon as Dave told his father about it Captain Hallard remembered the story, though he did n't think there would be anything of value left on the wreck after all this time. Whether that is so or not, however, nobody can say, really, as nothing has ever been heard of any one finding the platinum.”

“But did n't the sailor give Dave any idea where he saw the wreck?” Captain Grummitt asked.

“Somewhere near Christmas Island,” Dave put in.

“Now we're getting on,” said the skipper.
“How near?”

“Some distance away, I guess,” replied Dave.
“They were running toward Christmas Island from another place when they came across it.”

“Did he mention the name of the other place?”

“Yes, but I don't remember what it was now.”

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"Well, let 's see," observed the skipper, diving into a deep locker. "I 've got an old chart of the Pacific somewhere here. P'raps that will help you to remember. Ah, here it is!"

Captain Grummitt carefully spread the sheet on the cabin table, and with a pudgy forefinger indicated the position of Christmas Island.

"Now, you run your eye over that section," he said. "There 's precious few places around there big enough to have a name, so it should n't be a difficult job."

"Here it is—Fanning Island," Dave announced.

"Umph!" said the skipper, re-scratching his pate. "That gives you your bearings, in a manner of speaking, but you know them two islands are n't quite as near to one another as they look on that chart. The next question is, how long had they passed Fanning before they hit the wreck?"

"I don't think he mentioned any definite time,

"Here it is—Fanning Island," Dave announced





“IF EVER YOU GET THE CHANCE—”

but he said something about being a day's steaming off their course,” said Dave, struggling to recall more of the ancient mariner's yarn.

“That helps in a way,” the skipper commented. “But which direction had she drifted in—east or west?”

“I have no idea.”

“Umph!” The captain was silent, lost in thought for a moment or two.

“Did he say anything particular about the island?” he asked at length.

“The wreck was in a lagoon,” Dave said, “and there was a reef of rocks outside the lagoon, because they thought the ship must have struck those rocks and drifted over them afterward on a very high tide.”

“We're getting on,” commented the skipper. “What else?”

“I only remember one other thing. There was a sort of hill on the island, and in the distance it seemed to be shaped rather like a camel's back.”

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"That 's definite enough. Of course there are lots of islands around those waters with lagoons, and a lagoon most generally has a bunch of rocks round it, but it 's long odds you would n't find two islands there with a lagoon and a hill like a camel on it. There 's another thing. If you see a hill like a cow or a donkey, you 'll know it is n't that one."

"On the other hand," said Tempest, who had been listening with curious interest, "if you see the camel, it is worth making a mighty careful search in that neighborhood for the treasure-ship."

"You bet your sweet life it is!" said Captain Grummitt. "If I was twenty years younger and did n't have to spend my time dodging around Sydney Harbor looking for the price of the family's victuals and rent, hang me if I would n't put in a spell hunting for that old treasure-ship."

"Do you really think it might be worth while?"

“IF EVER YOU GET THE CHANCE—”

Tempest asked, his habitual manner of carelessness cast aside for the moment.

“Well, if you put it up to me that way,” said the skipper, blowing rings of smoke between each few words, “it’s a hard question. You see, you can’t get away from the fact that there is, or there was, a bark called the *Hatteras* there not very long ago, unless this old sailor invented it, and there’s no sensible reason for supposing he did that. Then again, if any one had ever found that treasure, the papers would have had a long yarn about it, and none of us ever heard of that happening. I could tell you a whole lot more of what I think about it if only I could get one peek at the wreck. Such a lot depends on what state she is in. Mebbe there’s nothing but her ribs left by now, in which case, good-by treasure. But if she’s pretty deep in the sand, and if she has n’t broken in half, I don’t see why there should n’t be a fair chance of this stuff still being on board. You see, there’s a powerful difference between

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leaving it all these years in the main street of Sydney and leaving it stranded on a little island where nobody in their sane senses would think of poking their noses. There 's islands there that don't have a human being on them once in a hundred years or more, and then, as likely as not, they might not happen to spot a half-buried wreck."

As he listened to Captain Grummitt, Dave began to see new interest in the lost *Hatteras*, and he would have liked to kick himself for not pumping his ancient mariner more.

"I think some fine day we shall have to go treasure-hunting, Dave," Tempest said with a quiet smile.

"If ever we get the chance," agreed Dave, cheerfully, as though a little trip to the neighborhood of Christmas Island was as simple as a jaunt on a trolley-car.

"If ever you get the chance," said Captain Grummitt, nodding his head with each word,

“IF EVER YOU GET THE CHANCE—”

“don’t you miss it! But how in thunder you’re to get the chance is more than I know, because there ain’t no ferry-boats running to Christmas Island this summer, nor any other summer, and you can take it from me the walking from here to there is pretty bad. Yes, sir. Pretty bad!”

CHAPTER XII

A BROKEN HAWSER

IT was during his stay on the *Mary Ellen* that Dave first learned, under the personal supervision of Captain Grummitt, who spent most of his time on the bridge, the art of taking a trick at the wheel. And during those watches in the little, boxlike wheel-house the boy also learned many other things appertaining to the ways of ships, for Captain Grummitt took a great interest in the lad. The time was not far distant, moreover, when Dave was to be thankful for such lore as he gathered from the portly old sea-dog.

Life on the tug was by no means devoid of its adventurous side. There were days and nights when the water was as calm as the proverbial mill-

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pond, and when the work of the *Mary Ellen* could be carried on without excitement; but there were also times when nerves of iron were needed. Picking up casual sailing craft which needed a tow was child's play compared with the *Mary Ellen's* task of taking a ship under its sheltering wing on a dirty night. The worse the weather was, the more likely the tug was to be needed outside the entrance to the harbor, and the skipper took a grim pleasure in riding out a gale when other craft found it prudent to take shelter.

One wild night, when Dave had been on the tug about a month, even the skipper was thinking of getting under the shelter of the Bluff, for the *Mary Ellen* was tossing about so heavily that her crew could barely keep their feet, and more than one hissing comber had deluged the deck. Rain was falling in sheets, and it was the darkest hour of the night. Dave was on duty with Grummitt in the little wheel-house. The tug was right in the track of all incoming vessels, but few passed,

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except one or two dark forms of steamers laboring along like gray ghosts of the ocean.

"It 's a rare night for trouble," Captain Grummitt said, "but I think this is where we get under the lee of the land for a spell."

Still he kept his hand off the engine-room telegraph. Once or twice during the last quarter of an hour he had been peering through his night glasses away to the southeast.

"Blow me if I didn't see a light down that way," he muttered. "Mebbe I 'm beginning to fancy things in my old age. If only this rain would ease up for a minute— Gosh! There it is again. Now what in thunder is up?" he said, suddenly moving the lever over to the signal "Full speed ahead."

The *Mary Ellen* plunged forward, rolling over at a terrific angle as the heavy seas struck her port beam.

"What do you make of it, Cap'n?" Dave asked.

"Dunno." Captain Grummitt was scratching

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his pate in perplexity. "She does n't seem to have shifted for a long while, so I guess we'll just find out."

Ten minutes' run brought them near enough to see what was happening. A large Swedish sailing ship, with poles bared, was riding uneasily at the stern of a tug. Apparently they were making no progress.

"Great mackerel, if that is n't the *Dolphin*, bitten more off than she can chew!" Grummitt said, scrutinizing the tug carefully. "I'll hate to butt in here, because Jim Cross is a pal of mine, but I allus told him them hawsers he bought would go back on him when the pinch came."

"Is Jim Cross the skipper of the tug?"

"Yes, and he's part owner, same as I am. He bought three new hawsers this year, thinking he was getting a bargain just because they only cost him half as much as they ought to have done, but I warned him. Now I bet he's wishing he'd paid double," the skipper went on grimly, manoeu-

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vring his tug around all the time. "There is n't a tug in these waters with more powerful engines than the *Dolphin*, and now Jim Cross dare n't set 'em going at full speed, because he knows he 'd bust the cable. A ship that size is a tough proposition to haul along in calm weather, but when you 've got both sea and wind running against you it takes a proper cable to stand the strain. He 's playing foxy now, going easy till the wind shifts."

By this time the *Mary Ellen* was within hailing distance of the *Dolphin*.

"Want any help?" Grummitt bawled through a megaphone.

"No, thanks." The words came back faintly, almost drowned in the gale. At the same time the *Dolphin* began to forge ahead.

"We 'll see," commented Grummitt. For five minutes he kept going, a trifle astern of the tug, until a savage swirl of wind caught the sailing ship simultaneously with a hungry wave. The

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Dolphin shot forward perceptibly, and Grummitt edged in nearer the Swedish ship.

The cable had parted.

"Slip down on deck," Grummitt said sharply to Dave. "This ain't going to be no picnic."

Steering with consummate skill, Grummitt brought the tug close alongside the Swede, and the boy heard fragments of a conversation between the two captains, from which he gathered that that was the second cable that had broken. A young giant stood by the rail of the *Mary Ellen*, poised ready to hurl a coiled lanyard across. It was a hazardous moment, for the slightest error in steering would have brought about a collision. At exactly the right second the rope flew out. The wind carried it aside, but some one on the sailing ship managed to grab the end. Eager hands drew the end of the *Mary Ellen's* finest hawser across, and a moment later the tug was moving ahead. While this operation was in progress the *Mary Ellen* was plunging wildly, and

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Dave was almost knocked into the scuppers by a sea while giving a hand.

He found Captain Grummitt singing a sailors' chanty merrily when he returned to the wheelhouse. The skipper had a habit of doing that when he had fought a hard battle and won.

"I 'm sorry for Jimmie Cross," he said to the boy, "but he should n't try to use rotten gear in a howling gale. It might have cost a pile of lives to-night."

An hour or two later they had rounded the Bluff, chugging along in comparatively smooth water, and the Swedish ship was berthed without further mishap.

The tug remained at her own berth in Sydney until the following day, and during that time Tempest again made inquiries about the boat he and Dave were waiting for to take them into the South Seas. He discovered that the *Manihiki* was due to leave in fifteen days.

"Well, I don't blame ye," said Captain Grum-

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mitt, when he heard their plans. "I don't know a trip that I'd enjoy much better myself. There's something about the South Seas that gets you—a sort of mystery. By the way, Dave, I don't want you to think I've forgotten that little thing you did for me when I toppled over into the dock." His hand went towards his pocketbook, where he always kept a roll of bills, but a look of dismay came into the boy's face.

"That was nothing. Anybody would have done it," Dave said.

"It may have meant nothing to you, my boy," Captain Grummitt replied with a grin, "but I still feel powerfully obliged, if it's all the same to you, and I'd like you to keep something of mine as a souvenir." Acting on a happy impulse, he drew from his pocket a plain silver watch and handed it to the boy. "It is n't the value of the thing I want you to remember, lad, so much as the idea of the thing. It's a mark of an old sailor's gratitude."

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The delicate spirit in which the gift was made pleased Dave even more than the watch.

"Thanks, Cap'n," he said. "I'll always be proud of that watch."

"An' if ever you come back to Sydney and want a job," said the skipper, "don't forget to look up Lightning Grummitt. If I have n't got room on board for you, I'll make room, see?"

The captain of the *Manihiki* was a middle-aged man named Peters, whom Tempest had met before, and neither Dave nor his friend had any difficulty in joining the ship. The *Manihiki* was no flyer. She had been built for her own particular trade, and did not draw too much water, so that she could be navigated in places where the captain had to rely more on common sense and experience than charts, for those who engage in trading with the islands must pick their way gingerly between treacherous reefs, often gaging the depth of the water by its color only. Usually, the *Manihiki* jogged along at a comfortable ten or

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eleven miles an hour, with a slight reserve of speed in hand in case of an emergency.

From Sydney she had a run of nearly two thousand miles before reaching the neighborhood of Fiji, and then began the part of the journey which interested Dave most. From one wondrous beauty-spot to another they went, sometimes lying at anchor off an island and sending a dory ashore to do the trading, and sometimes poking their nose so close to the land that it was possible to tie up against a tree. In some places a white man had established himself and did a thriving, if lonely, business by accumulating copra and other native products and driving a hard bargain with Captain Peters. One man in particular Dave remembered. He had built a wooden bungalow facing the sea, and the chief article of furniture it contained was a wheezy old harmonium on which its owner played comic songs, ten years old, extremely badly. In response to a pressing invitation Captain Peters and some of the men, includ-

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ing Tempest and Dave, paid a visit to the bungalow and took coffee there. One of the crew fetched an accordion from the ship, and for the first time in history a concert was held on the island, before a rapturous audience of fifty or sixty niggers who crowded around the bungalow.

"It 's the accordion they 're listening to," the trader explained. "The beggars thought the harmonium was a sort of magic when I first got it, and I had no end of a game with 'em, but familiarity breeds contempt. I remember the time when they used to bring any one who was sick, an' let 'em listen to the strains of a vaudeville ditty that Sydney and New York had forgotten, and 'pon my word the patient used to get well again straight away. They 're funny creatures, natives. They 've only got to make up their minds that they 're going to die and even 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay' on the old wheeze bag won't save 'em."

In some places the natives displayed a keenness

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for bargaining which would not have disgraced a dealer in second-hand clothes. The *Manihiki* had passed beyond the Fiji Islands and was working among the Tonga group when an incident occurred which might have led to serious consequences but for the prompt action of Captain Peters.

No boat had called at this particular island for nearly a year, and the natives had an exaggerated notion of the value of their accumulated wares. After a good deal of haggling between Captain Peters and the dusky traders, conducted in fragments of English and disjointed words in the native lingo, a bargain was struck, and all hands set to work on the task of stowing the copra away. While this was being done, however, the natives set up a noisy chattering among themselves, a disagreement having arisen, apparently as to what they were to get in exchange.

Two members of the crew stood guarding the knives, brightly colored cloth and ornaments which had been selected as the "price" of the

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copra, the last of which had just been put into the hold, when the chattering developed into a howl, and there were signs of an ugly rush.

Scenting danger, Captain Peters gave a quick signal for the anchor to be heaved.

"Push off those canoes there," he ordered quietly, at the same time producing a small revolver from his hip pocket. "Hi, you, Johnson," he added to one of the men who had seized a marline spike and assumed a threatening attitude, "if you hit one of those chaps I'll put you under arrest. Remember some other boat is coming here some day, and if we have a rumpus now they'll get ready for regular trouble next time." The propeller was revolving, and the *Manihiki* was slowly sliding away from her anchorage. "A bargain is a bargain, you squint-eyed lump of mahogany," the captain went on, leaning over the side and hurling his words at the chief, who was brandishing his arms, "even if it is between a gentleman in command of a first-class trading

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steamer and a low-down, sneak-thief Kanaka."

Then, as the canoes dropped behind, he waved his hand to their occupants, afterwards taking his place on the bridge to conduct the delicate operation of navigating his way through a mass of jagged rocks and cross currents.

This was almost the only occasion, however, on which the *Manihiki* encountered trouble with the natives. As a rule they had learned by experience that it paid best to come to some understanding and stick to it. There was probably a good deal of squabbling among themselves, after the steamer had left, on the question of a fair division of the spoil, but that was not Captain Peters's affair.

On the whole, the cruise promised to be a very satisfactory one, and the *Manihiki* was favored with ideal weather week after week, running under azure skies on an ocean that looked as though it must have been painted.

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"A penny for your thoughts," Tempest said early one morning when he came upon Dave leaning over the taffrail, staring out at the beautiful picture. The gray sky in the east was just becoming tinged with red, stained with the promise of the sun, and little wisps of mist floated in vague shapes, like scenes from Fairyland.

"It looks like—like a dream," Dave said.

"Does n't it!" Tempest agreed. "One of the queer things about these waters is that mist, which looks so dreamy, can become a regular nightmare before you know where you are. One has to navigate with brains instead of charts hereabouts, and the skipper does n't take quite the same view of fog as you do. He 's been grumbling for two days about it. It was pretty bad while we were down below in our bunks last night, and he had the engines running at half speed for some hours."

"But there's plenty of water where we are, is n't there?" Dave asked.

"Cap'n thinks so, evidently, because he 's

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pounding away at top speed, but it's mighty tricky work, because the current will carry you a mile off your course in no time."

Usually the mist melted and disappeared soon after the sun peeked over the horizon, but this morning it hung obstinately and grew thicker, looking like a vast curtain of down spread over the water. Before midday the captain slowed the engines again, and crept forward for several hours. As near as he could reckon, they were within a mile or two of an island marked on the chart, which he wished to see so that he could make doubly sure of his bearings.

Dave was below, in his bunk, fast asleep, when a peculiar, grating noise startled him.

"What's that?" he said, rubbing his eyes.

Again the grating, accompanied this time by a distinct bump.

"The old man's done it now!" a sailor exclaimed, jumping out of his berth and hastening into some clothes. "Bless my soul if he ain't

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tryin' to scrape seaweed off'n the rocks with the keel!"

Dave was on deck in less than sixty seconds. The engines were stationary, and the captain was barking out sharp orders. Instead of rising and falling gently, the *Manihiki* was firm as a rock at the bow and canting over slightly, while her stern hung a foot too low in the water.

"Some plates are stove in for'ard, sir," Dave heard a voice shout, "and the sea's coming in through a big hole!"

Four or five gulls hung gracefully overhead, as though waiting for the pickings.

Dave saw Tempest coming toward him.

"Shall we be able to back off, do you think?" the boy asked.

"I hope not," said Tempest. "If she slips off that rock, she'll sink in about three minutes."

CHAPTER XIII

WHEREIN TEMPEST STAYS BEHIND

CAPTAIN PETERS went below to inspect the damage. His face looked troubled when he returned.

"She 's piled up on top of high water," he said, "and I 'm afraid she 'll stay there. It 's a lucky thing the sea is dead calm."

About an hour too late a gentle breeze sprang up, brushing away the veil of mist and revealing their position to the *Manihiki's* crew.

The reef on which she had struck was submerged at all states of the tide, leaving nothing to disclose its existence but the dark color of the water, which the mist had hidden. Half a mile away on the starboard bow lay the island which the skipper had wanted to take his bearings from. Even at that distance it presented a beautiful

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sight, lying low like a vast, half-submerged emerald. At its highest point it did not seem to rise much more than fifty feet out of the water, and the slope down to the sea was covered with tropical growth.

As the tide went down, the slope on the steamer's deck became more apparent, and Captain Peters reluctantly ordered all hands ashore in the boats.

"Gather together anything you want particularly," he said. "You never know when a gale is coming along here, and she may slip off suddenly, but I guess we'll have more time than we care about to take things ashore."

Two boats were lowered, and the men got into them with a strange collection of bundles and things. Among the articles Dave took were his binoculars.

The boats grounded on a silvery beach of sand which nestled in a little bay that looked more fairylike than anything Dave had seen in his

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travels through the South Seas. There were no tall trees near, but foliage of wonderful colors covered most of the ground. As the men stepped ashore, a flock of birds with gorgeous plumage flew up from the bushes, uttering strident calls of indignation at the intrusion.

"It's quite clear there's nobody at home on this island," Tempest said. "I don't expect those birds have ever seen a human being before. Well, Dave, we're all going to play a little game of *Robinson Crusoe*, so cheer up. How would you like to spend the next ten years here?" It was characteristic of Bruce Tempest that he was not in the least perturbed by being marooned. Already he seemed perfectly at home, although he had not been on the island five minutes.

"Ten years!" Dave said, looking at his friend to see whether he was serious. A picture of the small house near the water in far-away Brooklyn flashed into his brain at that second. "How long do you think we might be stuck here?"

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"Goodness knows," replied Tempest; "but do let me persuade you not to worry. That won't get us off a minute sooner. The worst of it is that we are just about as far off the track of vessels as we could well be, and the wireless station on this benighted place does n't seem to be in working order."

"Then you really think we are likely to be here for a long time?"

Tempest glanced at the boy and saw no fear in his grey eyes, but very natural concern.

"Some of us, yes," he said. "I heard the mate saying something about taking a chance in the long-boat, and I guess that is what will happen. But, as you know, the long-boat won't hold us all. It's too early to think about that yet, though. You 'll find we shall have a pretty busy time at present getting all that's wanted off the poor old *Manihiki*."

There was, indeed, a strenuous time ahead. Although the weather was so perfect, Captain

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Peters was reluctant to let a minute be wasted in the task of fetching ashore everything that could possibly be useful to them. Bedding and food were his first consideration, and before nightfall both boats had made several trips, returning to shore laden down almost to the gunwale. The longest spar obtainable was rigged up on the highest point on the island, and a flag was sent up, fluttering in the breeze, while near by, a great pile of dry brushwood was gathered together, ready to send out a flaming signal in the very unlikely event of the lights of a passing ship being observed at night. When these operations had been concluded, Captain Peters realized that he had done all that could be done, for the time being, to attract attention. The shipwrecked crew established their quarters on a grassy stretch of ground a little distance from the shore, and slept, that first night, with the blue heaven for a roof, every man tired out.

Before dawn, however, they were up again, salv-

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ing stores. The men needed no driving. It was only too obvious to them what would happen if they did not save enough provisions before the *Manihiki* broke up or sank. Barrels of biscuits, beef and flour, cases of canned goods, tobacco, clothes from the slop-chest, the carpenter's entire equipment, and the navigation instruments, being the most important articles, were first brought ashore, and then followed tackle of all sorts, canvas from the sail-locker, and, finally, quantities of coal. The chief engineer was desperately anxious to unship a donkey-engine and convey that to the island; but as nobody could think of the remotest possibility of using the thing, it was left behind, partly dismantled, to crumble into rust.

Just ten days were occupied in stripping the steamer of everything movable, including doors and glass which "Chips," the ship's carpenter, welcomed, as he was already busily engaged erecting shelters from the torrential downpours of rain which were to be expected in that latitude.

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By common consent the first hut finished was handed over to the cook. His apparatus had been transferred bodily from the ship, and he dished out meals as regularly and satisfactorily as before. He was the only man of the party who had any real knowledge of that department, and when he realized how much every one was dependent on him he developed a slight touch of swollen head. Nobody minded that, however, so long as he had something to cook and kept on cooking it.

Tempest's first impression that the island was uninhabited proved correct. Nor was there any sign of a ship or natives having visited the place. The island was about a mile long and half a mile wide in the centre. A clear spring bubbled near the camping-ground, so, fortunately, no dread of thirst faced the men. Snakes were conspicuous by their absence. The only animal they encountered was a small species of wild hog. These creatures scurried about in the undergrowth, peeping out in alarm when any one went near and

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then fleeing, squealing loudly. How they ever came to be on the island was one of the mysteries of the mysterious Pacific. Captain Peters and Bruce Tempest discussed the point at great length, but were unable to come to any conclusion except that the ancestors of the hogs must have landed there from some wreck.

“What does it matter, anyway?” said Tempest, smiling. “We ’re all fond of roast pork whether we know its history or not.”

The twentieth day after the *Manihiki* ran on the rocks saw the end of her. One of those savage storms that come down so suddenly near the equator burst over the island. Black clouds appeared as if by magic, and long streamers of lightning lit up the boiling ocean. The air was filled with spindrift which swept half-way over the land, and some of the half-finished huts were torn down by the wind. Night fell while the tempest was at its height, but before dawn it vanished as suddenly as it had come. Not even a wisp of mist rested on

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the sea, and, as soon as the sun rose, the sky was of the same brilliant blue as before.

Of the *Manihiki*, however, there was nothing to be seen. Lifted from her rocky bed by giant waves, she had slid off the reef and now lay many fathoms below the surface.

The men began to grow restless as time wore on. They did not face with calmness the prospect of being marooned indefinitely.

"If we 've got to die, we 'd rather do it putting up a fight to get somewhere in the long-boat than lying around here, Cap'n," said one of the men while the subject was being threshed out.

"I quite agree with you," said the skipper, "though I would n't give much for the chances of the boat if another tornado like the last one comes along and hits her. Still, it's no use waiting here like rats in a trap when there is a run of only about four hundred miles to Suva in the Fijis."

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"How long do you reckon it should take us to make Suva, sir?"

"That 's a problem," replied Captain Peters. "There is n't any wind to speak of most days, and, unless it happens to come from a favorable quarter, we might be beating about for a month or more. Still, if you 're all game, I 'm ready to start as soon as you like."

The project met with general approval. The only thing that remained to be settled was who should stay behind. Even by taxing the boat to its fullest capacity, consistent with safety, at least three of them would have to remain on the island. It was decided to settle that question by casting lots, and Captain Peters placed a number of slips of paper in a hat. On all but three of the slips there was a cross; the others were blank.

There was an air of anxiety about the crew as they clustered round the skipper to pick their chance. Although the long trip in the boat would be attended with much hardship and considerable

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danger, everybody there preferred that to remaining marooned. Hopeless though it had seemed with the whole crew there, the prospect of being left with only two companions was regarded as considerably worse.

Captain Peters took the first slip out of the hat and grunted with satisfaction. Although the men would have preferred to have him with them on the trip, he had shared in the casting of lots. Dave watched the men's faces with curious interest as each dipped a hand into the hat. Some did so with a jest; others grabbed a folded paper eagerly, opening it in a feverish fashion. The first one to draw a blank was the carpenter.

"Well," he said, forcing a smile, "I 'll get you to take a message for my wife and kids, sir."

Dave's fingers trembled a shade when his turn came. There was no cross on his paper.

The third blank was drawn by a stolid Kanaka fireman, who shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing. He was an islander by birth, and the

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idea of being marooned did not seem so very terrible to him.

Dave looked at the colored fireman and the carpenter, and wondered how long they were to be his companions on that lonely isle.

Once this ordeal was over, the men set to work enthusiastically, preparing the boat for its journey. She was not built for sailing, but a mast, jib-boom, and cleats were soon rigged. When ready she was taken for a short trial-trip, and Captain Peters reported that she was good for any distance in fair weather.

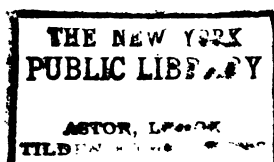
Provisions and water to last three weeks, with care, were placed on board, and the castaways clambered into the boat while a steady easterly breeze was blowing.

The Kanaka sat on a rock, digging his bare toes into the silvery sand and looking utterly unmoved by these proceedings.

"Good-by, lads," said the skipper. "Don't get



Dave, Tempest, and the Kanaka stood watching the boat glide away



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into mischief or spend all your money. You won't be here very long if we make Fiji all right. I'll pass the word along to the first trading-boat bound this way, and they'll pick you up. Come on, Tempest, get in."

"I'm not going," said Tempest, lighting his pipe and squatting comfortably on the sand. "I've taken rather a fancy to the scenery around here. You take the lad in my place."

"I'm very much obliged to you, Tempest," Dave said, looking his friend squarely in the eyes, "but I can't do that. We all picked our slips fairly, and I was unlucky, that's all."

"Then you'd better go, Chips," Tempest said casually to the carpenter, with a wink.

"You're certainly a white man," said the carpenter, who realized Tempest was making the sacrifice to stand by his friend. The two gripped hands for an instant, and then the boat was quickly pushed off the beach.

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Dave, Tempest, and the Kanaka stood watching the boat glide away until it was only a speck in the distance.

“Well,” said Tempest, at last, “we ’re both *Robinson Crusoes* now, and we only have one Man Friday between us.”

CHAPTER XIV

MAROONED!

ALTHOUGH those who had gone were naturally very much missed, the trio settled down to their lonely life a good deal more contentedly than they had anticipated. A more ideal camping-ground could not have been found, and, for the present, at least, they had all the necessities of life at their elbows. One of their chief recreations was fishing. The gear was primitive, Tempest fashioning hooks out of wire with the aid of a file, but the sport was excellent and provided a welcome change of diet. They were a little anxious at first about some of their catches, Tempest doubting whether several of the brilliantly hued fish were edible, but the Kanaka came to their rescue, picking out those which were poisonous,

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and also showing how fish were cooked in native fashion, by baking them in clay in the ground—a process which both Dave and Tempest were forced to admit put the old-fashioned frying pan to shame.

On one occasion a fishing expedition nearly led to disaster. While Tempest was busy ashore the boy went off in the dory with the Kanaka, and the sport was so good that they were tempted to remain at anchor some distance off the shore in spite of a brisk breeze that had sprung up. At last the weather-wise Kanaka, scenting danger, began to heave on the anchor. Instead of coming in puffs, the wind was now steady, dotting the surface of the water everywhere with “white horses.”

The two pulled at the oars for ten minutes until Dave, glancing over his shoulder, realized that they were making no progress.

Only then did the gravity of the situation dawn upon him. The Kanaka knew, but he gave no sign. The muscles under his bare arms and back

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played like ripples of velvet. He seemed to be made of sinew and steel. Toughened though Dave was by months of hard work, the strain began to tell on him before long, but the Kanaka kept plugging away, even when it became apparent that they were losing ground. The little island, from which Tempest was doubtless watching the struggle anxiously, was slowly but surely dropping farther away, and to make matters worse darkness shut down on the dory, swiftly following the sinking of the sun as it always does in the tropics.

They were still more or less under the shelter of the land, but the size of the waves had increased alarmingly, and more than one white crest toppled into the little craft. Soon they were up to their ankles in water, about which the dead fish floated.

"Bail um water out," said the Kanaka, pulling a little harder to make up for the deficiency when Dave shipped his oars.

The boy seized the tin and bailed furiously, but each time he got the dory nearly empty another

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curling wave hit the prow and hissed its way along the gunwale, slopping over the edge ominously as it went.

The stolid demeanour and dogged perseverance of the Kanaka helped Dave to keep up his spirits, although there were times when he saw no earthly hope of their getting back to the shore, especially when one wave, angrier than the rest, spun the tiny craft half round and left it half full.

"Bail um," the Kanaka urged, heading the boat round again into the teeth of the wind.

"Bail um," indeed, Dave did, for his very life. Had another wave hit them at that moment the dory would have sunk, but the fates were kind, and he got most of the water out before more came in.

When the situation seemed as desperate as it very well could be, the moon began to show a faint gleam, in which Dave could dimly discern the outlines of the island, and a little while later, as though tired of toying with its victims, the

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wind dropped suddenly. Dave and the Kanaka had about three miles to row to the beach, and both were utterly exhausted by the time the dory grounded.

Tempest, who, naturally, had feared they were both blown out to sea, lectured the pair of them in a fatherly fashion.

"And as for you, Jim," he said, turning to the Kanaka, "I should have thought you had more sense than to take such chances with an off-shore wind like that blowing. If you hadn't got back with the dory I 'd have pulled your ears off."

Jim grinned.

"Sea she no tell me about her fool tricks," he replied in his curious polyglot English picked up partly from the cosmopolitan crowds in stokeholds and partly in the Philippines.

The Kanaka was by no means an unwelcome member of the party. He had intelligence of an unusual order for his kind and displayed great ingenuity on occasions. What his age was neither

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Dave nor Tempest could determine, and Jim certainly did not know. Probably he was in the neighborhood of forty. He was not particularly communicative, but piece by piece the other two extracted some of his history. His early boyhood had been spent in the Sandwich Islands; but being by nature a roamer, he left there and became stranded at Tahiti, far to the south of Honolulu. He did not remain there long, however, moving from one place to another, sometimes as a sailor, sometimes picking up a scant subsistence as a fisherman, and sometimes living a life which was more than half savage. His knowledge of the islands in the South Seas was extensive and peculiar; and like Tempest, he had the trick of making himself completely at home wherever fate happened to set him down.

"Have you ever been to Christmas Island?" Dave once asked him, wonderingly.

"Lived there two summers," Jim explained. "Nice place. Not many people."

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"I should judge not," Tempest commented.
"Did you ever get to Fanning Island?"

"Know um; not lived there," the Kanaka said.

"Ha! Ha! The plot thickens," said Tempest. "You know some of the other islands round about there perhaps, eh?"

"Some," said Jim. "Lived in Philippines since then. Lot of years ago."

"It seems to me that Jim would be a mighty useful man to take along with us if ever we go hunting for your treasure-ship, Dave," said Tempest. "He is n't a bad old sort, and he might be able to pilot us around a bit."

"That's a good idea," the boy agreed. "I suppose we are n't so very far off the place now, are we?"

"No-o," replied Tempest, "if you don't reckon two or three thousand miles far, and add to that that we're marooned on an island for an extremely indefinite period. Outside of that, you can fairly count on the treasure being ours and

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make a few inquiries as to to-day's market price of platinum to see how much you're worth."

"You're laughing now," Dave said, "but you won't laugh once you see me sitting on the deck of the good ship *Hatteras* counting up a fortune."

"She has n't any deck left. It's all been washed away."

"How do you know? You haven't seen it. Jim, are you coming with us to Christmas Island?"

The Kanaka shrugged his shoulders. He thought it was some silly joke.

"I expect we'll have to bribe him," Tempest said. "Jim, what would you like best of all in the world?"

The Kanaka was squatting with crossed legs on the sand, screwing his eyes into the sun to watch the graceful flight of a gull. He was wearing all that remained of just two garments—a shirt, the sleeves of which he had removed by main

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force, and a pair of cotton trousers rolled above his knees. Back on one of his beloved islands, where there was no coal to shovel into greedy furnaces and where time was a word that had almost ceased to have any meaning, he was fast reverting to nature. He looked like a person whose highest ambition would be to lie on his back and bask in the sunshine for ever and ever.

As the gull seemed to disappear in the burning sun Jim turned round slowly with a lazy smile.

"More than all the other things in the world, um?" he repeated, looking at Tempest, who nodded.

"One time," Jim said with quaint gravity, "I sailed on a big ship round Cape Horn to a place where all the ships come from, bigger 'n Manila, bigger 'n Iquique, called Hobroken."

"Hobroken?" Tempest queried, wrinkling his brows in perplexity. "Where in the name of fortune is that?"

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"Great big place," declared Jim, extending his arms wide as though to indicate the size. "Hobroken up a river."

"You don't happen to mean Hoboken, by any chance, do you, Jim?" Dave asked.

"Hobroken—dat 's um, Hobroken," the Kanaka said, hugely pleased.

Dave rolled backward and roared with laughter.

"That 's almost a part of a place called New York City, Jim," he said at last. "Did n't you ever hear of New York?"

The Kanaka nodded, but looked puzzled. He saw no cause for mirth.

"New York somewhere near there," he said.

"Well, what about Hoboken, Jim?" Tempest asked.

"One time I 'd lika go to Hobroken again," was the reply, uttered impressively, "with two three dollars."

"Funny thing," said Tempest, blowing rings of smoke; "you 're not the first person I 've heard

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express the desire to go to New York with dollars, but 'two three' would n't carry you very far there, Jim."

The Kanaka, who had worked wonders on that sum in Manila, was coldly incredulous.

"What would you do when you got there?" Dave asked.

Again Jim smiled happily. The prospect was evidently one which he had treasured in his moments of leisure while basking on various islands in the South Seas.

"Wear clothes like um other peoples," he said, "and ride in um trolley-cars."

"And stop there always?" Tempest suggested.

The Kanaka shook his head slowly, now watching another gull skim the water.

"Just for a bit while," he said, "then p'raps come back here or some other place."

"He's got the New York fever," Tempest laughed, "but it is the most comical case I ever heard of. I expect New York would soon cure

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him, especially when his two three dollars were gone, and then he 'd begin to pine for something really exciting again, like the fight he had with that twelve-pound fish yesterday."

"Never mind him, Jim," Dave said. "You come to Christmas Island with us, and after that I'll take you to Hoboken, where you can ride about in trolley-cars in a tall silk hat with feathers in it if you like. Will you come?"

Jim shrugged his shoulders and extended his hands—a gesture with which he always expressed agreement.

As the days drifted on, and Dave and Tempest grew to know their island home better, they came to the conclusion that there were worse things than being shipwrecked under such conditions. As a rule the cooking was done by Dave, he being the accepted expert, but in the hunting and fishing they all three joined, and they obtained much excellent sport. Jim, with a native's cunning in the chase, devised various methods of

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catching birds as a change for their food, but their best sport was the hunting of pigs. The little wild animals were by no means easy to catch, and this was only done occasionally, neither Dave nor Tempest liking the idea of killing them. Excepting the creatures with gorgeous plumage which still made strident noises when any one approached them, the birds were remarkably tame, no doubt because the hand of man had never been raised against them. There were boatswain birds, wideawake tern, puffins by the thousand, and white-cap noddys, besides others which Tempest could not name, though the Kanaka had an unpronounceable name for every kind. Some of the birds were so unused to fear that they merely strutted out of the way when any one passed.

On one occasion Jim, with great pride, prepared a special dish which was evidently a sort of islanders' omelette. It consisted largely of sea-birds' eggs and tasted rather like cod-liver oil. Rather than hurt Jim's feelings, Tempest

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and the boy gulped down their share and congratulated him on his skill, but after that they were careful not to encourage him in a repetition of the experiment.

Dave's greatest joy was a pig-hunt. The little wild animals were by no means easy to catch, but they formed a delicious dish which rewarded the hunters for their trouble. The chief difficulty in capturing them was the natural shelter they sought in the thick, tangled undergrowth. Fully half the island's surface was covered with impenetrable bush, intertwined with a fearsome form of cactus whose leaves were like saws. It was utterly impossible to force an entry into this natural fortress, through which the small hogs had beaten innumerable run-ways but little wider than their own bodies. Once a pig got into the maze of run-ways it was as safe as though in the heart of a jungle, but occasionally the hunters were able to surprise their quarry in some of the isolated clumps of bushes. In this the Kanaka's assist-

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ance proved of the utmost value. Like most other men who have lived in a semi-wild state, his hearing was extraordinarily acute.

"I'll get um li'le pig," he said once when they had tried several times to make a capture and failed utterly.

"What are you going to do?" asked Tempest. "Make a noise like a sweet potato and bang 'em on the head while they 're standing still trying to scent it?"

Jim did not deign to make any reply, but occupied himself during the greater part of the next few days in making a number of strong nets from twine, each about five feet square, with small lengths of twine attached to the corners. While this operation was in progress the other two, considerably mystified, submitted the Kanaka to good natured joking.

"I know," said Dave, "he 's going to fish for them."

"Great," commented Tempest. "I hear that

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pig fishing is one of the chief sports in the Sandwich Islands. What do you use for bait, Jim?"

Jim, however, worked on stolidly, finally surveying the crude nets he had constructed, with much satisfaction.

"Now I show you how to catch um li'le pig," he observed with a grim smile.

With an ax he cut three formidable looking clubs from a tree, and then leading the way to a clump of bushes some distance from their camp he tied the nets loosely across the entrances to the various runways.

"Lie still," he ordered. "Bimeby we hear him say 'grump-grump' maybe p'raps."

Each holding one of the murderous clubs, they squatted on the ground. There seemed to be perfect stillness, such as one can find on an isle in the Pacific on a calm day. Not even the soft soothing sound of a ripple on the sea shore reached them. Once or twice the melancholy call

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of a distant gull reached their ears, otherwise they were in a soundless world.

Suddenly the Kanaka raised a warning finger. The porker had betrayed its presence to him, though neither of the other two had detected it. He motioned Tempest and Dave to the place where the animal was most likely to break away. Once he saw they were ready at their stations he went round to the other side of the bushes and set up an unearthly din that was calculated to drive any self-respecting hog out of its senses.

Yelling himself hoarse, and beating on the tangled branches like a mad thing with his club, he kept up a running fire of warning to the others, sometimes lapsing into a heathenish tongue in his excitement.

At last, without the slightest warning, an alarmed pig, squealing as though a pack of hounds were at its trotters, bolted at full gallop.

Full tilt it went at a net near which the boy and his companion were waiting in breathless

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suspense. The net came away from its moorings, as Jim had intended it to, with one or more of the porker's legs hopelessly entangled in the meshes; and there ascended heavenwards a squealing the like of which had probably never been heard on the island. Over and over the pig rolled, struggling frantically to free itself. Both Dave and Tempest were rushing towards it, with clubs upraised, when confusion was added to the situation by another pig bolting into a second net.

Dave spun round, leaving Tempest to deal with the first animal, and knocked his captive out with a lucky blow just as the Kanaka came rushing round the edge of the bushes.

"Hoo-la! hoo-la!" Jim yelled in ecstasy; and rather than take any chances he despatched the little hog quickly.

Tempest, meanwhile, was in difficulties. Before he could reach his pig it had extricated all but one foot from the net, and was careering madly away, dragging the net with it. Tempest tore

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after the quarry which was making instinctively for a run-way in the main jungle, but after he had run a dozen yards he caught his foot in the root of a tree. By the time he had picked himself up again the porker had bolted like a rabbit up the tunnel, shedding the net at the entrance as it went.

He went back to the others and offered his congratulations to the boy.

"That 's one to you, Dave," he said. "He looks a nice young one, too. If I 'm any judge he 'd make a supper for the gods. I don't believe I could stop a tortoise in a passage."

"Never mind," Dave said. "It will be your turn next time, and anyway we could n't eat two pigs at once, even if we are starving shipwrecked mariners with only the stores off one ship to keep us alive."

The prize was conveyed back to the camp, where a heated discussion took place as to how it should be cooked. Tempest, who confessed he knew

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nothing about such matters, argued that it should be done one way. Dave, whose experience in the galley gave his word a certain degree of authority, protested that it should be cooked another way. Jim, on the other hand, declared it should be baked whole, in the ground, native fashion; and finally the other two gave in to him. They watched the process with great interest, and when it was ready to eat they unanimously decided that whatever Jim's omelettes were like, no Fifth Avenue chef had anything on the Kanaka when it came to roast pork.

On the morning following the pig hunt Tempest announced that, while the others were out fishing, he was off on a little exploration tour. Although the island was so small, there were many parts of it which they had not yet reached. In places it was difficult to get down to the beach, and at the northern end there were rugged peaks in a trackless district, where one had to climb laboriously.

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Dave and the Kanaka returned to the shore soon after noon, and were surprised when Tempest did not arrive for the midday meal. Not until the swift setting of the sun, however, did Dave grow anxious, and then he began to realize that something untoward must have happened, for Tempest had taken no food with him and the boy could think of no reason why his friend should remain away until after dark.

He and Jim ascended the nearest hill and shouted continually, but no reply came from the silent jungle nor beyond.

"Come on, let 's get some lanterns," said the boy at length. "I 'm going to make a search."

Leaving a light burning at the camp, for there was no moon and the stars were almost obscured by clouds, they set out in the darkness, Dave feeling distinctly uneasy. He racked his brain to think of some plausible explanation of Tempest's failure to return. Until after midnight the two searched and called in vain. Then, with a heavy

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heart, the boy returned to the camp, to toss about uneasily, fully dressed, until dawn.

Tempest had disappeared, and Dave was alone now, but for the half-savage Kanaka. The boy, however, did not think of his own position. It was the thought of his friend which kept him awake.

CHAPTER XV

LAUNCHING THE MUD TURTLE

THERE was still no sign of the missing man at the camp when the sun rose, and a fear that had haunted Dave began to become very real. He was now firmly convinced that his friend had gone for a swim and been drowned. In a very dismal mood he walked down to the bay where they usually took their dip, and searched, fearing to find what he was searching for.

"Jim," he said at last, "we'll put up some lunch and spend the rest of the day going over every foot of this island. There's always a chance."

Systematically they explored the southern and western extremities of the place, and the sun was already slanting westward when they came to the rugged territory in the north. Dave had very

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little hope left, when suddenly Jim gave a cry of delight which brought the boy to his side at a run.

On one of the few patches of ground which did not consist of hard rock two or three footmarks were distinctly visible.

"We get him yet," declared the Kanaka, now moving quickly from place to place like a hound eagerly picking up scent. A score of yards farther on he stooped over a broken twig and silently pointed to it. Under it was the faint imprint of a shoe heel.

Gradually they progressed almost to the northern shore, guided by one indistinct mark after another and shouting as loudly as possible every few minutes.

At length the Kanaka put his hand on Dave's shoulder suddenly, his head bent in a listening attitude.

A faint cry reached the boy's ears.

"Thank goodness!" he said solemnly.

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Five minutes later he was by Tempest's side.

"Hello, old top," said the latter, in a weak voice. "You don't happen to have a plate of ham and eggs about you, and a quart or so of coffee, do you? I'm ravenous. I couldn't find a restaurant open anywhere round here."

"Stop fooling!" said Dave. "Where are you hurt?"

"I guess I ought to be nearly all right by now," Tempest said with a grin. "I've been doing nothing particular but nurse it for about thirty hours. I twisted my ankle a bit yesterday, and I must have bumped my head in falling, because I don't remember much about it."

"Well, cheer up," said Dave. "We'll soon get you home now."

"Oh, I've been cheered up for the best part of an hour," said Tempest. "I heard you and Jim yelling the top of your heads off, but the wind was in the wrong direction for you to hear me shouting back. I knew you'd roll up sooner or

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later. Sorry to give you so much trouble. Jim, you 're as strong as a rhinoceros, if not so good-looking. If there isn't any sign of a taxicab, would you mind giving me a pickaback as far as our little dump, and I 'll promise never to call you an ugly old sinner again!"

Without a word the Kanaka stooped, and Tempest scrambled onto his back. He winced once or twice as they traveled over uneven ground, for, in spite of his cheerfulness, his ankle was very painful. Tireless as a horse, Jim carried him all the way, and deposited him gently at the camp, where Dave assumed the rôle of doctor. It was now his turn to apply a cold compress, but the sprain had been a severe one, and the swelling did not go down appreciably for three days.

While the patient was lying resting his injury he and Dave had a long talk on the possibility of their being picked up. Five weeks had elapsed since the crew of the ill-fated *Manihiki* set sail. It was only possible to speculate, of course, as to

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what had happened to the small craft. There had been no very rough weather on the island, but that was not much to go by, as a terrific storm might sweep by within fifty miles and never be noticed where they were.

"It is a little early to get impatient, yet," Tempest commented. "If they have all been sunk, we may be left here till we have beards down to our knees, and not a soul would be the wiser; but we can safely wait three months before making up our minds for that sort of thing."

"I suppose we could n't possibly try to make the trip in our dory?" Dave suggested.

"There's no law against it," Tempest said, "but you don't catch this child trying the experiment. You remember what happened not long ago when you and Jim were out fishing and the wind got up a bit. And you were practically under the shelter of this island all the time. You can imagine what it would be like if a regular gale hit that cockleshell."

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“Well, could n’t we build a boat?”

“I ’ve thought of that. But it ’s a big undertaking, you know, and I never made anything out of wood but a dog-kennel. I ’m game to try, though, if you like. It ’ll amuse us if it does nothing else. Let us start by giving her a name. What are you going to call this wonderful craft? How will the *Mud Turtle* do?”

“That ’ll do finely,” said the boy. “We will start on her as soon as you can walk.”

Though neither Tempest nor Dave knew it, the day they laid the keel of the *Mud Turtle* the crew of the *Manihiki* were being landed at Melbourne, their plans having gone somewhat astray. They had covered half the distance to Fiji laboriously by tacking against adverse winds most of the time, and had reduced their ration of water by half, as their supply of that precious liquid was getting perilously low, when a steamer nearly ran them down in the middle of the night, the only lamp on the long-boat having been broken. The helms-

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man on the steamer heard their cries just in time to swing aside, and the men from the *Manihiki* were only too thankful to accept the offer of a passage to the first port the vessel was bound for. There was no wireless on board, so until he reached Melbourne Captain Peters was unable to notify his owners of the loss of their vessel and the plight of those he had left on the island. A month was to elapse, moreover, before the next vessel was to leave Sydney for the scene of the shipwreck.

The task of building the *Mud Turtle* was a more formidable one than even Tempest had anticipated. To begin with they had very few planks that were of any service for the purpose. One of the spars off the *Manihiki* made a rough keel, but almost all the rest of the material had to be hewn out of green trees. They had plenty of tools, however, and though the skeleton of the craft would probably have convulsed a professional boat builder with laughter, it had at least

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more resemblance to a boat than a dog kennel, as Tempest pointed out.

The *Mud Turtle* was sixteen feet in length, and somewhat narrow in order to overcome some of the difficulty of getting curves. As a matter of fact she consisted chiefly of angles. From the first she had no pretensions to elegance, and in spite of her builders' ingenuity there were awkward gaps where the rough planks positively refused to meet, this necessitating a great deal more caulking and patching than was consistent with beauty.

"How fast do you think she will sail?" Dave asked when they had her about half finished.

"About a knot an hour, if we get out and push," Tempest replied lugubriously. "Pity we did n't let that engineer bring the donkey engine ashore. We could have rigged it up and converted our wonderful boat into a steamer, maybe p'raps, as Jim says."

The Kanaka, who had distinct ideas on the sub-

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ject of boat building, but whose ideas had been overruled because Tempest thought a catamaran such as they could construct would be as dangerous as a bundle of dynamite, viewed the *Mud Turtle* with something akin to suspicion, if not actual distrust; but he worked on her just as cheerfully as the others, putting in long hours with the saw on green timber and using other carpenter's tools with remarkable skill considering they were all strange to him.

It was decided to have the boat half decked in, lest they should encounter bad weather, but before tackling that part of the job Tempest and Dave made up their minds to set their vessel afloat for a trial trip, just to see how she took to the water. Before sliding her down the beach they went over every seam and applied pitch liberally. She looked more like a disjointed miniature coal hulk than anything by the time they had her ready, and when Dave ran a critical eye over her he had certain misgivings.

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"She 's no racer, certainly," he said, "but considering she is the first boat we ever made the result is n't so bad, is it?"

Tempest glanced over her awkward lines.

"I 'll tell you better when I see her dancing over the silvery waves," he replied cautiously.

"We 're ready now, are n't we? All together. Push."

The *Mud Turtle* slid down the greased boards with the grace of a lumbering elephant, Dave, Tempest and Jim hanging on to her tenaciously. Just as she plunged into the water they all three leaped up the side. The boat had come down a considerable slope, and threw up a large wave as she dived. The water was dead calm, and the *Mud Turtle* shot out twenty feet from the shore, but even as she was doing so her builders realized that something was radically wrong. She was canting over at a perilous angle, and the strain of being launched had strained her timbers alarmingly. In half a dozen places jets of water were

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squirting into her, and in one place where a patch had been sprung the sea was coming in faster than it could have been bailed out.

Jim looked at the wreck of their hopes with a perfectly blank expression. Perhaps he had anticipated something of the sort all the time. Dave, standing ankle deep in the bottom of the boat, frowned gloomily. Tempest, leaning against the side of the craft that was highest out of the water, in an attempt to keep her balanced, laughed long and loudly.

"I don't call it a bit funny," the boy said, watching the *Mud Turtle* slowly settle down.

"I refuse to burst into tears about it," Tempest said. "It is a whole lot funnier to see her going down now right here than it would have been if we had got about fifty miles away from shore in her and then she had started to play tricks on us."

"I suppose it is, really," agreed Dave, who was beginning to absorb from Bruce Tempest some of his unquenchable good spirits whatever hap-

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pened. "But can you suggest what we 're going to do with her now?"

"She would fetch a lot of money anywhere—as a curiosity," said Tempest. "But I 'm afraid the buyers of this interesting maritime monster will have to be quick, because in a few more minutes the sad sea waves will have closed over her for ever."

"Can't we do anything with her?" the boy asked, smiling now in spite of his disappointment.

"She is getting too wet to burn. That 's all I can think of."

"What about putting ballast in to keep her upright?"

"You 'd have to put enough rocks in to force the bottom out of her. No, I 'm sorry to say it, Dave, but the *Mud Turtle* is a hopeless failure. Come on, we have either to swim ashore or go down with the brute."

And so, in six feet of water, they pushed off from the boat a few minutes before it quietly

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sank. Its gunwale was disappearing as they reached shore.

During all the time the trio were marooned they kept a fixed rule that every three hours during the day one of them was to ascend the hill where the flagpole stood and scan the horizon through the binoculars. As the weeks sped into months they became more hopeful, for the time was now nearing when the steamer sent by the crew of the *Manihiki* might put in an appearance. Whatever doubts Tempest may have had on that score, he said nothing about them. He knew well enough the grim possibilities that might overtake a small, crowded boat on a trip of four hundred miles, and there were times when he thanked his stars that neither Dave nor he had undertaken the trip. At the same time, it occurred to him there was a distinct chance that they might have to remain where they were for a year or more, and, rather than miss the opportunity of attracting some boat that might pass in the night, he kept

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the bonfire of brushwood near the flagpole ready to light. Sometimes he and the boy would stroll up to the look-out post during the evening and yarn, while keeping a watch on the dark waters.

One night—it was the night of their seventy-second day on the island—Dave, having dozed most of the afternoon, felt little inclination to sleep. His two companions were in the land of dreams. Stepping softly, to avoid waking them, he passed out of the hut, and strolled out into the night air. A thin crescent of the moon shed a pale light, and the stars glistened like a myriad of diamonds set in the sky. First he strolled slowly down the silvery beach and stood near the edge of the water, whose waves were lapping the sand gently. He stood there a few minutes, drinking in the tropic beauty of the scene, and then, to get a wider view, walked up the hill to the flagpole.

Scanning the horizon as a matter of habit, his

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eye rested for a second on something far away where the starlit sky seemed to dip down into the ocean. He stood still as a statue and tried to find it again. Surely it was imagination—or was it? He could have been positive that just for a fraction of a second a greenish light twinkled in the distance. Perhaps it was a star. At any rate he could not pick it out again with the naked eye, so he walked down for his binoculars. Five minutes later he was back on the hill, peering through the glasses.

Suddenly his heart gave a thump. That was no star. The greenish hue was unmistakable. Like a hare, he leaped down to the camp, shouting to awaken Tempest.

“Matches, quick!” he yelled excitedly, fumbling in Tempest’s pocket. “There ’s a ship away off, fifteen or twenty miles to the south’ard.”

“And I was just getting off to sleep so beautifully!” expostulated Tempest, who, however, did not allow any grass to grow under his feet. He

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and Dave made a dead heat of it up to the flagpole, Jim lumbering up in the rear.

"Where away?" asked Tempest, while Dave put a light to the dry twigs.

"Right over there, in a line with my finger. Use the glasses, or else you can't see it." The boy's finger shook a trifle as he pointed.

"Thunder! You 're right, laddie!" Tempest said after a moment. "More brushwood, quick. Jim, you scalawag, I 'll skin you alive if you don't get busy. The fourth of July is n't in it with this for a bonfire. Get an ax, you Kanaka. Bushes—trees—whole forests if you can find 'em!"

Already the flames were licking their way above the pile of brushwood, and Dave and Tempest were wildly tearing at the branches near by. Soon the Kanaka, with gleaming eyes and mighty strokes, was tearing off more fuel, which was quickly flung to the top of the bonfire.

"That 's the style!" Tempest shouted as the fire threw their figures up in its glare. "If she 's

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going straight by there, we may only have a little while to attract her attention. Jiminy! We ought to have a fire they could see in Australia!"

Regardless of scratches and cuts, they toiled on, while the flames rose higher and higher, Tempest pausing only now and again to take a squint through the binoculars. At that distance it was very difficult to see whether the vessel was putting about.

After about half an hour of this strenuous labor he leaned, breathless, against the pole to steady the glasses.

"I can't see a blessed thing of her now," he said.

"Here, Dave, you have a try."

The boy looked long and carefully.

"I don't see the green," he said, "but if I'm not mistaken there's a white light in about the same place."

"More trees—more forests, Jim, or I'll tear your ears off. That's the mast head light. She's put about. Say good-bye to the little pigs

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on this island, Dave, because I 'm a Dutchman if you 'll get the chance to do it soon. We 'll be bound for furrin parts before you know where you are."

Another half-hour showed unmistakably that the ship was heading direct for the beacon. The trio still kept the flames leaping until the vessel was about a mile off, and then they went down to the beach, where the steady thump of her propeller was distinctly audible. Soon the rattle of an anchor-chain came over the water, and the dark form of a dory came creeping over the lagoon.

Dave was wildly elated. Tempest, now that the suspense was over, almost seemed to be losing interest. It was beginning to dawn on him that he had been as happy on the island as he ever was anywhere. The Kanaka squatted on the sand with expressionless face, not even giving a grunt of satisfaction when the dory ran on the sand.

"Hello, there!" said a voice. "Anybody at home?"

CHAPTER XVI

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“**T**HREE of us,” replied Dave. “And all mighty glad to see you.”

“What is it? A picnic party? Well, I’m hanged!” said the voice, the owner of which jumped out of the boat. He was a big, broad-shouldered man, with a pleasant ring in his voice.

“Much obliged to you for calling,” said Tempest. “Hope we have n’t inconvenienced you.”

“It’s a wonder we ’re here at all,” said the big man. “I saw your beacon as I was going below. Marooned?”

“Our ship had a bit of an argument with a rock out there,” said Tempest, “and the rock won. We ’d be glad of a passage out of this. You in a hurry? There ’s lots of stores worth taking.”

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"Stores, eh?" said the big man, who proved to be the mate. "Guess I 'd better see the skipper about that. It 'll be daylight in a few hours. You come off and see him."

A dozen faces peered curiously over the side of the steamer as they approached it.

"Bless my soul!" said the skipper, when Dave and his companions stepped aboard. "What have we got here?"

Tempest explained briefly, thanked the captain for stopping, and mentioned the stores.

"Why, yes, I 'll be glad to have them," said the skipper. "We 're not over provisioned. Those natives at Fiji wanted too much for their things for my liking, so I only took enough to last till we hit 'Frisco."

As soon as it was light the captain himself went off and inspected the mass of stuff that had been landed from the *Manihiki*.

"Jer-usalem!" he said, "but this lot is worth a young fortune. Who 's the real owner of it?"

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“You ’ll have to fight that out with the owners of the *Manihiki*,” said Tempest. “May I ask if you ’re calling anywhere on the way to San Francisco?”

“A few places in Samoa, then Washington Island and Honolulu,” replied the skipper.

Tempest smiled.

“That ’s funny,” he said. “I was going to ask you to oblige us with a passage at the expense of the *Manihiki*’s owners, but since you ’re bound for Washington Island I think it would be much better if you could sign us on as members of your crew till we get there.”

“Why, certainly. I can do that,” said the skipper. “What ’s the idea?”

“Nothing much,” Tempest observed, “except that we might have a little—er—business not so far from Washington Island; and though we ’re not stuck for funds, a bit of extra cash might come in very handy when we get there.”

The captain displayed no further curiosity in

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the matter. He had knocked about the South Seas too long to be surprised by the mysterious movements of men there. He turned his attention to hustling out to the ship all the miscellaneous articles which had to be got aboard and checked; and long before midday his vessel was again heading for the northeast.

"Do you know where we are going to get off this packet, Dave?" Tempest asked as soon as they got the opportunity for a quiet chat.

"Not exactly," the boy replied. "I heard you saying something about Washington Island, but I never heard of it. What is the scheme?"

"I 'm afraid they never taught you your geography very well," said Tempest, stuffing tobacco into his now well-worn pipe with an air of great contentment. "Some people never can see a piece of luck when it comes their way, even if it is sticking out half a yard."

An idea flashed into the boy's mind. Christmas Island was away to the northeast. They were go-

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ing northeast as fast as their engines could take them.

“Are you thinking about the *Hatteras*?” Dave said in a low voice. He was conscious of a little thrill even as he put the question. Hitherto, their discussions about the treasure-ship had been more or less vague. True, there had been wagging of wise heads and solemn discussions over charts in smoky cabins, but they had always taken place many thousands of miles from that mysterious island where the semblance of a camel’s back loomed up over a lagoon. The subject had been interesting, but intangible. Now, in a flash, it seemed different.

“Tell me what Washington Island has got to do with it?” Dave asked, with a serious light in his grey eyes.

“Only this—that if we get off there, we shall be within something like three hundred miles of the spot where your old mariner says the bones of the *Hatteras* are sticking up out of the sand,”

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Tempest replied. "Even three hundred miles is a mighty long distance, in a way, but it's better than three thousand, and it looks to me as though Old Man Opportunity was going out of his way to knock at your door a second time. Do you remember that I once told you there comes a time in everybody's life when it's worth while to go full steam ahead whatever effort it costs? Fussy people, who get excited over every blessed thing from sunrise to sunset, haven't got any steam left in 'em when the big chance bobs up. They fuss along just the same as they always have done, but they haven't got any punch to it. Now, it looks to me as though this is where you and I should wake up."

"Well, you know, Tempest, whatever you say, I'm with you." A queer sense of excitement was beginning to creep over the boy. It was only at rare moments that Bruce Tempest dropped the mask of light-hearted carelessness, and he was un-

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questionably serious now. "What do you suggest?"

"I can't say," Tempest replied with a light laugh, seeing how intent the boy had suddenly become. "Don't let this make an old man of you. We may be on a wild-goose chase all the time—but then again we might not. And what we've got to do is to assume that it *is n't* a wild-goose chase. We've got to try this thing out, somehow or other."

"Well, there's one thing," Dave commented. "One might go to sea for a hundred years and never get as near as three hundred miles to Lost Island again."

"That's just my point," said Tempest. "To tell you the truth, I can't see very far ahead at the moment. If we had a private yacht and plenty of money, the thing would be simplified; but we haven't too much money between us, and our yacht is now rotting at the bottom of the Pacific."

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That is as far as the *Mud Turtle* ever got. Anyway, we 've got arms and legs, and Jim is going to stick with us."

"By the way, Tempest," Dave said, "has it ever occurred to you to wonder whether that treasure really would be ours if we did happen to find it?"

"It has, and it would," the other replied. "I know what you mean—the man who mined it turning up and claiming it and all that sort of thing. Yes, I have thought of that, and I should think it 's about a million to one that nothing of the sort could possibly happen after all these years. I talked that over with old Lightning Grummitt, and he took the same view that I do. No, laddie, put that right out of your mind. Never cross your bridges before you get to them. The man who dug that platinum up is as dead as mutton; and though I 'm sure I should be only too pleased to let him have his share if he did bob up, it just won't happen. If he were alive, don't you think he would have moved heaven and earth to get back

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to the wreck of the *Hatteras* and rescue his blessed stuff!"

"I suppose he would," Dave agreed. "But if it comes to that, how do we know that he never did go back to the *Hatteras* and get it, the same way that we propose to do now?"

"How do you know that pigs can't fly when you are n't watching 'em?" Tempest expostulated. "How do you know the earth is n't flat? How do you know the moon is n't made of green cheese? You 've never been up to see. The only thing we shall know definitely, if ever we do handle the treasure, is that that platinum miner was too dead to go for it himself."

"There 's no getting away from that," Dave agreed, now satisfied on the subject.

During his watch below, Dave spent some time during the run to the Samoan Islands writing to his father, knowing that Captain Hallard must be growing anxious. He told how they had been cast away, and wrote cheerfully about all the ad-

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ventures he had had since leaving Australia. Of the immediate future, however, he said very little, not being sure himself of what was likely to happen.

"I am leaving this ship," he added, "at Washington Island, with my friend Bruce Tempest, and we may stop a week or two in that neighborhood."

Dave nibbled the end of his pen thoughtfully for a while. He was wondering whether his father would look Washington Island up on the map and connect his making a stop there with the old *Hatteras*.

"After that," he went on, "I am surely coming home, as I want to see you both again very much. I started out for just one trip away and back, but it seems to have got mixed up somehow, does n't it? Ask Aunt Martha to be ready to make me some flapjacks, as I have n't had any since I left Brooklyn."

Knowing nothing of what was in store, Dave thought the time was not far distant when he

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would be eating those flapjacks and proudly relating his own stories of the sea to his father.

Tempest, however, did not seem to share that view. For him, he was growing curiously serious. He rarely lost his old, bantering way, but there were moments when he was unusually thoughtful. He was wrestling with the problem of how one man, one boy, and one Kanaka were to perform the prodigious feat they had set themselves on an extremely limited capital with the best possible chance of success. It was not an easy problem. It would be galling to get so far and not be able to get any farther. And yet Tempest had the conviction that they would find a solution to some of their difficulties. As to the treasure, his mind was perfectly open on that point. To him the matter was merely an interesting possibility. There were a dozen reasons why, even if they ever did reach the end of this curious journey they were planning, they would never find what

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they were seeking at the end of it; but the bare possibility of success made it worth trying. And when Tempest did find anything in life that he considered worth going after, he went after it very hard.

The steamer made one or two calls on her way, and Dave was surprised to find such signs of civilization in remote places like Apia, where a trim little mail boat was just arriving, crowded with tourists. Even here, Tempest was not unfamiliar with the sights. Once before he had landed at Apia for a few hours, and now was able to show Dave around.

But the boy's interest was not in the beautiful home of the Samoans for the moment. The adventures that lay ahead filled him with suppressed excitement. That they might be pretty desperate he knew: exactly how desperate he could only conjecture. He was all agog to sight Washington, from which point they would have to start

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shaping their course in real earnest, and when the steamer cleared Apia at last for that island he stared ahead at the blue, tumbled ocean as though trying to read the riddle of the future.

CHAPTER XVII

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THE weather was sizzling hot as the steamer neared Washington Island, which is only about two hundred and fifty miles north of the equator. Dave and Tempest received the pay they had earned on board, according to arrangement, and added it to their joint capital with a feeling of thankfulness, for it seemed likely that every penny they could accumulate would come in handy when the pinch arrived.

The first thing Tempest did when he got ashore was to inquire whether there was likely to be a vessel of any kind going to Christmas Island soon, but he was disappointed. Traders calling at Washington were few and far between.

The population consisted chiefly of colored folk,

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who appeared to have nothing much to do except bask in the sweltering heat. Dave was feeling distinctly glum, when a short, rotund man, remotely resembling a barrel in shape, rode past on an extremely lean pony. Recognizing strangers, the man nodded and drew rein.

"Can I offer you any assistance?" he asked. Perspiration was oozing in streams from his brow, which he constantly wiped with a very large handkerchief.

"Thanks," Dave said; "we wanted to get to Christmas Island."

"Why, that's worse than Washington," said the fat man, "and heaven knows this is bad enough. Nothing ever happens here except the rising of the sun, and then all we can do is to wait till it goes down again. Christmas Island is so near the equator that you could almost jump onto it from there."

"Well, we're going the first chance we get. Can you say when that might be?"

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"Maybe a month," said the stranger. "You can't tell. What're you going to do in the meantime?" In the intervals between mopping his brow he was studying the boy and Tempest closely, and apparently the inspection pleased him.

"I guess we shall have to find somewhere to stop," Dave said. "It does n't look like a place where we are likely to get work."

"Work!" the man laughed. "No. I've been here as a planter for some years now, and I confess I never did see any one work yet. To tell you the truth, it's always a mystery to me how anything ever gets done. You have to explode a stick of dynamite behind these colored people to get a move on them. When I was running a store in Dogtooth City, Dakota, I would n't have stood for this sort of thing, no siree! I was strictly business every time and all the time there. I made my pile in Dogtooth City, and I won't say I did n't come pretty near to making Dogtooth City, too. I was mayor of that little burg three

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times, and sometimes I wonder which particular kind of a fool I am to be here now, when I could go back to Dogtooth and be mayor a fourth time if I liked. They know there that Joe Flagg won't stand any nonsense."

Clearly, Mr. Flagg was naturally garrulous, and he was letting off steam, not having had the opportunity to speak to a stranger for some time. But also he was thinking while he talked, and evidently made up his mind at length.

"It 's mighty lonely up at my bungalow," he went on after a scarcely perceptible pause, during which he gave a final and comprehensive glance at the pair, "but I 'd sure be tickled to death if you 'd come up and stop with me for a while. It seems as though I had n't had any one to talk to in years. Now when I was in Dogtooth City—"

"That 's very kind of you," said Tempest, leaping at the chance. "To tell you the truth, we were just beginning to wonder what was going to

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happen to us. If we can give you any help about the place—”

“Tush, tush!” said Mr. Flagg. “You are doing me a favor. I like to let my tongue wag sometimes, and I ’ve got nobody to talk to up there but Kanakas.”

“By the way, we ’ve got a Kanaka that we ’re taking along with us,” Tempest said, nodding his head in Jim’s direction. “If you would n’t mind giving him a shake-down too—”

“Sure! Bring him right along. This reminds me of old times. Why, my house was Liberty Hall when I lived in Dogtooth City. I remember once—”

Mr. Flagg talked on as his skinny pony walked in leisurely fashion over the brow of a hill, along a lane between the waving trees of the plantation, and finally to a rambling house with a wide veranda running all round it.

“Here we are,” said Mr. Flagg. “And when I tell you you ’re the first people I have had stay-

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ing under my roof for nearly eighteen months, perhaps you 'll understand how glad I am to have you. It 's no hotel, mind you. We have to put up with a lot of things besides heat on Washington Island, but I 've drilled my boy into cooking till he is one splendid artist with the pots and pans, though he did n't even know how to open a can of beans when I first took him in hand. Yes-sir, Joe Flagg knows how to cook, though I do say it. When I was in Dogtooth City—”

“He 's a decent sort of chap, is n't he?” said Tempest to Dave a little later, when they were alone for a few minutes.

“He 's great, so far as his hospitality goes,” the boy replied. “This suits us down to the ground, but I fancy we shall get a bit tired of Dogtooth City before we say good-by, sha'n't we?”

“That 's easy,” said Tempest. “All you have to do when you see it coming is to butt in with some other subject, and he switches off all right.”

Mr. Flagg certainly went out of his way to be

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agreeable to his guests, and both Dave and his companion found it a particularly pleasant change to live in a comparatively comfortable house and be waited on. Joe Flagg was as amusing as he was fat, and he often sat by the hour puffing at his pipe, telling remarkable stories of his early life in the West, when men really carried six-shooters just as they do to-day in the movies. In spite of his rotundity Joe Flagg was a very active man. He was always wiping perspiration from his brow with the great handkerchief, but the way he got round on foot put his scraggy pony to shame. Also he was an amateur sailor of no mean ability, and often went for a long cruise, accompanied by a couple of Kanakas, in a three-ton sailing craft in which he seemed to take more interest than he did in his plantation or anything else. He appeared to be devoid of fear. His boat certainly rode well in a heavy sea, but the rougher the weather the more Flagg liked it.

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"I 'd run the three of you over to Christmas Island myself," he said one day, "only I don't want to lose you."

"You 've never been as far as there, have you?" Tempest asked.

"Not quite, but pretty nearly."

"You must know these waters well, then."

"I ought to," said Flagg. "I 've been pottering around in 'em for years."

Tempest was thoughtful for a few moments. He caught Dave's eye. The same idea had occurred to both of them at that instant.

"There was a bark called the *Hatteras* went ashore somewhere around here years ago," Tempest said at last. "Did you ever hear anything of it?"

Joe Flagg rubbed his chin with a pudgy forefinger.

"The name is kind of familiar," he said, "but I don't place it for the minute. There 's a good

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many ships have hit trouble in this locality at one time or another."

"Did you ever land on Fanning Island?" Dave asked.

"Why, yes, more than once," replied Flagg. "We sheltered under there three days last fall when it was blowing hard."

"Do you know any of the islands to the south of there—in the direction of Christmas Island, I mean?" asked Tempest.

"Yes, in a way," Flagg said. "There are n't many of 'em till you get nearer the equator. Pretty lonely spots too, let me tell you."

"Did you ever notice a wreck on one of them?" Dave said.

"More than one," replied their host, "but I don't remember anything particular about any of 'em. The sea does n't leave much of them except a few ribs after a year or so."

Again Dave and Tempest exchanged glances.

"I wonder whether you happen to know of an

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island round about there that has a biggish hill on it that looks like a camel's back," Tempest said.

"There is one with a hill on it," replied Flagg, reaching for a chart, "and that may be the one you're talking of. You see, they're all very low in the water. That island with the hill must have been bumped up by an earthquake or something. I never noticed a camel's back on it, but you'd probably only see the resemblance from one side. I'm not quite sure, but I think this is it," he went on, indicating the point on the chart with the stem of his pipe. "You thinking of setting up a real estate business there?" he asked, with an amused smile. "I give you my word that it's one dreary place."

How many times had Dave and Tempest pored over their chart and speculated idly on which of the little dots indicated the island that was their goal!

"It certainly does just about fit in, does n't it?"

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Tempest said to Dave with a touch of enthusiasm. "We 'll make for there first, anyway."

"Well, it 's none of my business," said Mr. Flagg, "but if there 's any way I can help you, put a name to it."

"That 's very kind of you," said Tempest, apparently absorbed for the moment in getting an obstinate pipe to burn. Here was Old Man Opportunity hammering hard. Mr. Flagg had a boat that was perfectly suitable for the trip. Mr. Flagg and his two Kanaka sailors knew the waters as well as any one else. Mr. Flagg, also, probably knew the very place Dave and Tempest were so anxious to reach. Tempest did some hard and quick thinking in a very few seconds. It would only be fair, if they took Mr. Flagg into partnership, to give him a full share of the possible proceeds. After burning his second match Tempest had decided that he and Dave would carry out their original program and do the whole thing off their own bat if possible. At least they

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could make their one big effort. If that failed,—if they could not get a boat, or if they got a boat and could not find the place they were looking for,—it would always be possible to come back to Joe Flagg and put the proposition up to him on a proper business basis.

“No, I don’t see exactly that you can do anything for us,” Tempest added at length. “There ’s a wreck there that Dave and I have a particular fancy to look over, and we ’re going to make a trip in that direction from Christmas Island, when we get there. It may be waste of time, but we ’ve set our minds on it. There was some stuff worth a pile of money on the *Hatteras* when she was lost, but that ’s a good many years since.”

“Go to it,” said Flagg encouragingly. “Never let a chance slip by. That has always been my motto, because if you don’t grab your chances in this world, you won’t get anywhere. But if I may express an opinion without discouraging you,

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it seems like a mighty slender chance to me. Perhaps you 've never seen a real storm in this part of the world, eh? I mean the sort of storm that smashes everything. Well, I tell you that anything but rocks on the beach gets beaten up into splinters in very little time. I 'm afraid you won't find any wreck there. If I 'm not too inquisitive, what is the stuff in the vessel? You 've got a nice job on if it is at all bulky."

"Platinum," Tempest replied. "It is worth a good deal more than gold nowadays. It would be easy enough to handle if ever we got the chance to handle it."

Joe Flagg shook his head slowly many, many times.

"I hate to sound like a wet blanket," he said, "but you 're up against some proposition. Do you know what part of the ship this treasure stuff was stored in?"

"Well, it would n't be in the hold," Tempest said. "We figure on it being in one of the cab-

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ins, or perhaps the owner had given it into the captain's care. He might have had it locked up in his quarters."

"Yes, but my dear man," Flagg said, "you don't tell me seriously that you expect to find the captain's cabin there now, with the remains of his breakfast on the table just as he left it!"

"Well, we 're going, anyway, are n't we, Dave?" replied Tempest. "You see, Mr. Flagg, there is just this point. The bark is n't lying in an exposed place. She is—or was—squatting snugly, weighted down with sand, in the shelter of a lagoon where the sea practically could n't smash her up. At any rate, she would have a far better chance in there than she would if she were just lying stranded on the rocks in the open."

"That makes a difference," said Flagg, more encouragingly, "though you 'll have to go there to find out how much difference. Listen to me, Tempest. I 'm a man of business, as any one in Dogtooth City will tell you, and all my life I 've

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been willing to take a chance when there was a good thing going. You know well enough that there are big difficulties ahead of you. Now, why not let me come in on the deal? My boat is lying here in Shavay Bay doing nothing in particular. I could provision her for the trip and land you right back here on this beach with the stuff—if we found it. What do you say? Of course, I wouldn't want to do it for nothing. The whole thing is a matter of speculation. I suppose there's only you and the boy in on the proposition. Suppose we say split the proceeds into three?"

Dave looked at his friend inquiringly. He had great respect for Tempest's judgment, and would have fallen in with any suggestion Tempest thought fit to agree to. The idea sounded fair enough. Anyway, Dave was not actuated by any mercenary motive; so far, the love of adventure had carried him toward the *Hatteras* as much as had any hope of monetary reward. Tempest

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knew that, and he avoided the boy's eyes for the moment. Of course, it would have been by far the easiest course to do as Flagg said, but from a purely business point of view the notion struck Tempest as being stupid. If Mr. Flagg had suddenly descended with his boat on them while they were marooned after the wreck of the *Manihiki*, it was very possible that Tempest would have leaped at the chance of making the little fat man a partner in the matter. But as things were, it was different. Fortune had favored them greatly by bringing them so close to the spot they were struggling to reach. Perhaps fortune would do more for them. The weather remained perfect. It would be so easy to offer a third of a possible fortune in return for this proffered assistance.

"I 'm very much obliged to you," he said, after careful deliberation, "and I don't mind saying it 's a big temptation, because it sounds fair; but you see, Mr. Flagg, we 've made up our minds to worry through alone. I 'm not very obstinate in the

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ordinary way, but when I do set my teeth into a thing it takes a whole lot to get 'em out again. I 'll tell you what I would be very glad to do, though. We want a boat. You know that. Let us have yours for the trip, and in return we will pay you whatever you think is reasonable for the hire of it. And on the top of that, we 'll undertake to hand over a thousand dollars more in case we are successful. Are you agreeable?"

The discussion of high finance evidently made Joe Flagg perspire more than ever. He mopped his brow industriously, but shook his head.

"No, sir," he said. "Nobody goes off in the *Firefly* except when I 'm in her. I 've allus made that a rule, and I allus shall. I come in as a partner for a third of the spoil, or the *Firefly* stops where she is."

"Then there is nothing more to be said on the subject, Mr. Flagg, and I 'm sorry we can't do business with you," said Tempest, with an air of finality.

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“All right,” said their rotund host, indifferently. “I don’t blame you. Probably I’d feel the same way myself if I were in your shoes. A difference of opinion in a little matter of business need n’t alter friendship, need it? Now, I remember when I was mayor of Dogtooth City—”

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH THE FIREFLY DISAPPEARS

IN spite of his obvious disappointment, Joe Flagg remained as suave and courteous to his two guests as ever. Both Tempest and Dave, however, began to grow restless as time slipped along. There was still no sign of a vessel calling to take them to Christmas Island, and they felt they could not impose on Mr. Flagg's generous hospitality much longer.

When Mr. Flagg was engaged with affairs connected with his plantation, the other two often went for a long hike together. It was seven miles from one end of the island to the other. There were few houses except those near Invisible Bay, where the chief settlement was situated. The idea of hiring another boat had already occurred

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to Tempest, but unfortunately there was not one that appeared to be suitable for the purpose. A good many of the island's residents owned small craft, but Tempest was not inclined to trust his own life and that of Dave to such cockle-shells.

During one of their rambles they heard that there was an Englishman named Cresswell living near the north shore who had a fairly useful sailing-boat called the *Nautilus*, and the pair promptly started off on a tour of inspection. Cresswell, they found, was a taciturn soul, who spent most of his life nursing a grouch and a bad leg. He could only hobble about with the aid of a stick, and his boat was lying far up on the beach, exposed to the merciless glare of the tropic sun. The paint on its side was blistered, and the heat was fast reducing it to the condition of a sieve.

Tempest examined it carefully before bearding Cresswell, and though far from pleased with the craft, he decided it might be made seaworthy.

The task of putting the matter before Cresswell,

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however, was a somewhat delicate one, for their funds were not in a flourishing condition, and all the money they possessed would be needed for provisions, unless they were to run the risk of starving to death out of sight of land.

"We want to make a little trip on the water, sir," said Tempest, "and we thought perhaps you might loan your boat to us, for a consideration."

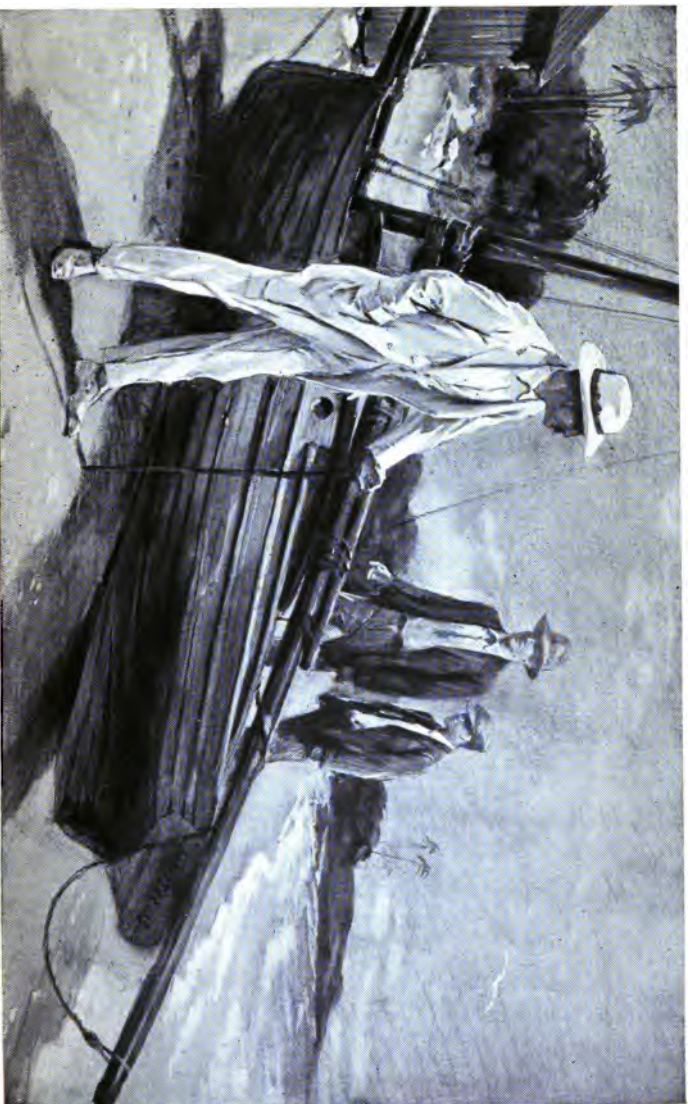
Cresswell glared from one to the other.

"And who told you I'd lend it?" he asked acidly.

"Nobody," replied Tempest. "But we need it rather badly, and as you were n't using it just now we thought you perhaps might—"

"What are you doing on the island, anyway?" interrupted Cresswell. "You don't live here. We get too many strangers prowling about these days."

"We're waiting for a steamer to take us off, sir," said Tempest in his most affable tones. "Now, about the boat. She's just getting ruined



"Who told you I'd lend it?" he asked acidly



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by lying there in the sun. If you would be so kind as to allow us to use her for a while, I'll make her seaworthy for you."

"Don't know as I want her made seaworthy," the man replied. "She's comfortable enough lying where she is."

"I'm sorry we can't offer to pay for it in advance, Mr. Cresswell," Dave said, "but I'll give you my word that the money shall be sent to you sooner or later."

Cresswell laughed. Something about the notion seemed to amuse him. He scrutinized the boy carefully for a few moments.

"Hang me if I don't put you to the test, youngster," he said. "Ten dollars a day is what I'll charge you, and you're to make good anything that gets broken. And if you find she's sinking and you're going to drown, don't annoy me by throwing farewell messages overboard in bottles."

Before Dave or Tempest had time to thank him

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properly Mr. Cresswell hobbled back into his house.

“He ’s a queer sort,” Dave said.

“Never mind, we have a boat now,” commented Tempest, with a new flash of enthusiasm. “She is n’t exactly the sort of craft I should have chosen for monkeying about with in the Pacific, but she ’s better than nothing. Now, my lad, off with that coat of yours. We have a nice little job ahead of us to fix the tub.”

Near the boat was a shed in which the sails were stored. They were in passable condition. Some of the lanyards were rotten, but there was other rope that could be utilized for the purpose. The first thing they did was to haul the boat down to the water’s edge and half sink her to swell her timbers. They put in the rest of that day repairing the gear.

Next morning they found their boat considerably improved. They hauled her high and dry, and set to work caulking the leaky cracks. Before

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nightfall Tempest nodded approvingly as he surveyed the result of their labors.

"I'm satisfied," he said. "If only we have fairly decent weather, there is n't the least cause for us to feel anxious. Come on, Dave. Let's take her for a spin."

When afloat, the *Nautilus* exceeded Tempest's expectations. They tried her both before the wind and tacking, and their spirits rose joyously when they found how handy she was.

Up to the present they had said nothing to Joe Flagg about their acquisition of the *Nautilus*, out of consideration for that individual's feelings, but now it was necessary to mention the matter, as all that remained to be done before they could start was to lay in the necessary stock of food and water.

"I hope he won't feel sore about it," said Dave, as they walked back. "I believe he thought we should change our minds eventually and take him into partnership."

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"He certainly has been mighty good to us," Tempest replied, "and I would n't do anything to make him feel peeved if I could help it, bless his heart. But business is business, Dave, and we should be foolish to let sentiment interfere with an affair of this kind."

Joe Flagg was awaiting them on the veranda, beaming as usual and working diligently with the handkerchief upon his moist brow.

"I thought you'd deserted me," he said. "What have you two rascals been up to all day?"

"Getting ready to desert you, Mr. Flagg," said Tempest. "We have changed our program a little instead of going to Christmas Island. I'm afraid we have almost overstayed our welcome as it is."

"What's this—what's this?" puffed their host. "What d'you mean about overstaying your welcome? Wait till I say anything like that. I know of no vessel coming here for a week or more yet."

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"That is so," said Tempest. "Fortunately we have been able to hire a small sailing-boat that will do for our purpose."

Mr. Flagg did not speak for a moment.

"All right, my lads," he said at last. "You know your own affairs best. But don't get any crazy notion into your heads that I'm wanting to turn you out. Under my roof you can stop as long as you have a mind to, see?"

Mr. Flagg was so amiable about the matter, and treated his guests with such marked affability during the rest of the evening that Tempest almost found it in his heart to relent. Only the fact that the trim little *Nautilus* was lying snugly at anchor caused him to refrain. After an early breakfast next morning Dave and his companion started out for the north shore to take possession of their boat and bid its owner a more or less fond farewell.

"Don't bother me!" Cresswell snapped. "I want nothing from you but ten dollars a day.

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And mind you, no messages in bottles as you 're sinking. Ouch!" he added, putting a hand to his lame leg and turning his back on them.

Five minutes later the *Nautilus* was heading round the bend toward Shavay Bay, both her occupants feeling more than a little pleased with themselves.

"Hello, Flagg's boat is out, I see," Dave said when they reached their destination.

"I suppose he has gone fishing," Tempest observed.

"No, he said he was going to be very busy on the plantation all day. He will kick up a nice rumpus with his two Kanakas if they have taken the *Firefly*."

For some hours Tempest and Dave were exceedingly busy. It was probable that their very lives would depend on what they took on board, so they laid out their scant capital with the utmost care at the island's solitary store. A couple of

IN WHICH THE FIREFLY DISAPPEARS

axes, shovels, and a few simple cooking utensils were placed on board.

“I ’m afraid we haven’t got much in the way of navigating instruments,” Tempest said, “but Jim will help us to worry through. This pocket-compass of mine is fairly accurate, and with our old chart we ought to manage all right. Heigho! I ’ve known amateur yachtsmen who ’d be scared to death at the idea of making the trip that is in front of us without a sextant, chronometer, patent log, barometer, dividers, and parallel rulers, besides compass and charts. Never mind, it’s a comfort to reflect that you can only be drowned once. Dave, my son, we ’re in for it now. A life on the ocean wave, eh? In my time I ’ve done some funny things, but I never before set out in a cockle-shell like ours, with one boy and a Kanaka, looking for lost treasure. Well, we ’re ready now,” he added, as they placed the last beaker of fresh water in the *Nautilus*. “I only

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want to see the wind shift round a bit and then we will start."

"It 's due east now, is n't it?" Dave said.

"Pretty near, and a nice job we should have beating up against it. I should regard it as a good omen if the fates sent us a gentle breeze from the northwest to start us nicely on our journey. Let's go up to the bungalow and say good-by to old Flagg, bless him! He has been a real friend to us."

But Flagg was not there, nor did he put in an appearance when the sun was dipping in a crimson sky to the westward.

"Bother him!" Tempest said. "We can't very well slide off without wagging his paw and saying a few nice things. I wish he'd come. The breeze is dodging round more to the west'ard, and we should get a fine start now."

After darkness had fallen Tempest began to grow anxious about Flagg. The men employed on the plantation reported that they had seen

IN WHICH THE FIREFLY DISAPPEARS

nothing of him all day, and his scraggy pony was securely tethered in its stable.

"This is beginning to get mysterious," Dave said.

"I think perhaps we ought to organize a search-party and hunt for him," Tempest suggested. "He may be lying injured somewhere."

Dave was looking out over the darkened sea. He said nothing for several minutes.

"I wonder whether a search-party would find him," he observed after a lengthy pause.

"Why, what do you mean?" Tempest asked quickly. His own nerves were almost on edge.

"I mean," said Dave, slowly, "do you really think he is on Washington Island at the present minute?"

"Great Mackerel, Dave, but I 'm glad you 've said it! Do you know, the same idea has been worrying me ever since sunset, and yet I hated to put it into words."

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"Well, since we have put it into words, what about it?"

There was a steely glitter in the boy's eyes which Tempest had never seen there. The same glitter had come once or twice before, when Dave suddenly found himself in danger or when faced with apparently insurmountable obstacles, just as it had come into the eyes of his father and his grandfather on similar occasions.

"There is no sign of the *Firefly*," agreed Tempest. "I wonder if the old villain is trying to beat us to it."

"Now I come to think of it," said Dave, "he never could look one straight in the face. Tempest, I've got my suspicions!"

"And so have I, Dave," Tempest replied, now thoroughly strung up. "The longer we hang around here, the better start he has. Fortunately, the wind has n't been in the right quarter to please him all day. Come on, Dave," he added, already

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hurrying in the direction of their boat. "I don't know what speed Flagg can knock out of the *Firefly*, but we 'll give him a run for his money in the *Nautilus*."

CHAPTER XIX

LOST ISLAND!

FOLLOWED by Jim, they scrambled into their boat, and shot the sails up; and in a few minutes the *Nautilus* was bobbing her way out of Shavay Bay on a course almost due southeast, her bow being in a straight line for Fanning Island. From the latter place Tempest intended to take his bearings, and then veer slightly to the south in the direction of the island Joe Flagg had indicated on the chart.

“I ’ll tell you what, Tempest,” the boy said when the sails were bellying and the waves were flopping against the boat’s nose, “if we do happen to have made a mistake in judging Mr. Flagg, and he ’s only gone to pay a visit to some one, he will think us a queer lot to have bolted like this.”

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"If!" commented Tempest, grimly. "I 've got a good deal of faith in human nature, my lad, but I'd rather believe our friend was 'way back in his precious Dogtooth City than where he is at this minute. Foxy old rascal! He 'd have given his ears for a breeze like this during the day. As it is, I don't believe he can be much more than two or three hours' sailing in front of us. Who would have thought of him sneaking off like that? I don't know whether he expected we should smell a rat and come after him quickly, but he reckoned on getting a full day's lead of us anyhow."

"It will be an interesting moment when we do meet him," Dave said with a smile.

"He will be polite, even under those circumstances, and try to work in a few funny stories. I 've met his kind before."

"By the way," said Dave seriously, "does it occur to you to wonder what will happen if Flag does happen to get there first and collar the platinum?"

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"It does n't," replied Tempest. "I know. It is a case of 'finding 's keepings.' The first party to grab that treasure has just as much right to it, legally, as he has to his own bank balance. That is why we are not going to stop to gather daisies on the way. As a matter of fact, if only we can find our way without wasting too much time, Mr. Flagg won't have had a chance to do much by the time we arrive on the scene; and then there is likely to be some fun."

"*Fun!*" Dave exclaimed.

"Well," said Tempest, "as the heads of nations put it, we shall have 'severed diplomatic relations.' In other words, if we find Joe Flagg picking the bones of the old Hatteras, the fat will be in the fire."

"It was a mean trick," Dave commented, gloomily.

"Oh, cheer up!" Tempest laughed. "It 's all in the game. If you will come treasure-hunting you must be prepared to hit a snag or two, or a

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head or two if necessary. I 'm rather looking forward to hearing what he has to say on the subject."

A little wisp of spray shot over the side as the *Nautilus* plunged before the wind, which was increasing as the night wore on.

"That 's right, blow!" said Tempest, hanging on to the tiller and gripping the stem of his pipe hard with his teeth. "I 'd hate a dead calm just now."

"It looks like a dirty night," said Dave.

"Well, we can't wash it," the other replied, grinning. "It 's 'neck or nothing' now. There is no turning back for us, and I give you my word it will have to be a lot dirtier than this before Flagg shortens sail or tries to take shelter. He has a pretty fair idea now that the hounds are at his heels. Isn't she a peach in a strong wind, eh?"

The *Nautilus* was certainly acquitting herself most creditably. She careened over under the

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pressure of wind, but shipped nothing except flying spume.

"I only hope that mast is n't rotten," Tempest said, glancing upwards. "We should be properly in the soup if that snapped."

"Are you thinking of taking in a reef?"

"Take in nothing! We 'll nail our colors to the mast, so to speak, Dave. If the thing goes bust we go bust too, so far as getting anywhere is concerned. All the same, I 'm glad those halyards are of fairly new manila."

Jim, who did not know precisely what this new game Dave and Tempest were playing was, sat steadying the boat and staring hour after hour over the black expanse of water. He knew they were bound for an island, and that the pair were looking for a wreck; but beyond that he was not concerned. They had all been distressed mariners together, and therefore had a bond of sympathy between them. Moreover, he had nowhere

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else to go, and might just as well be on the *Nautilus* as anywhere else.

"Grr," he muttered suddenly about midnight, peering almost straight ahead. "Him light over there."

The others looked but could see nothing.

"Sure?" asked Tempest.

"Him light not there now. Him gone," said the Kanaka.

"That 's strange," said Dave. "What do you make of it, Tempest? It could n't have been the *Firefly*, could it?"

"Can't say. These Kanakas have wonderful sight, but the *Firefly* must be a mighty long way off."

"But they won't be carrying regulation lights, any more than we are."

"That 's true, but I expect they have some sort of a lamp on board like ours, to keep an eye on the compass, and one of them may have been holding

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it up at that minute. All the same, we have to take our hats off to Jim if he really did see it."

Although the wind continued to blow moderately hard that night, it was steady, and therefore caused no particular anxiety. The *Nautilus* was eating up the knots like a racer, and Tempest awaited dawn anxiously in the hope of sighting Fanning Island.

"Keep your eyes skinned for land, Jim," he said.

Jim merely nodded. The sky was growing fairly light when he pointed with a brown forefinger away on the starboard bow.

"Him land," he declared.

"Rubbish!" commented Tempest. "That 's a bit of a cloud on the horizon."

Dave was levelling the binoculars in the direction.

"He 's right, Tempest," he said.

"Gee, but that 's fine!" said Tempest. "I hardly expected to hit it off quite as near as that,

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not knowing anything about the currents. Allow me to remark, Dave, that that was some feat of seamanship on my part. Jim, you bottle-nosed squab, glue your eyes to these glasses and tell me if you see anything of a sailing boat in the offing. There 's a friend of mine in it, and I particularly want to say 'good morning' to him."

Jim obeyed instructions, and searched in every direction without success.

"I guess they 've taken a short cut," Tempest observed. "Flagg did n't have to make Fanning Island first. Well, well, that 's a point in his favor. It puts him another hour, or maybe two, ahead. I hope one of his sails splits, and that 's the most charitable thing I can say for him."

As the breeze remained steady and there was no indication of any change in the weather, Tempest gave the tiller to Dave during the morning, and snatched a couple of hours' sleep, curled up in the bottom of the boat. It was afternoon when the boy aroused him. He would not have done so

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then, but for the unexpected happening. Within the space of twenty minutes the wind developed a chilly tang, and ominous clouds gathered overhead.

The weather-wise Kanaka constantly glanced upwards, but made no comment until a sudden rain squall hit them.

"We 'll have um sea get up pretty soon," he said then, without any change of expression.

"You 're right, I believe, Jim," Dave agreed. "This is where we rouse the skipper, I guess."

Tempest frowned as he took the tiller again. He did not like the look of things. They had taken a chance in a small open boat, and if a real storm broke they would be entirely at its mercy, for they were many miles from the nearest shelter.

Three minutes later the wind dropped to a dead calm and the sails hung limp, while a curious yellow tinge developed in the northern sky.

"Now we 're in for it!" Tempest muttered. "Here Jim, you hang on to this rudder. Dave,

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the mainsail, quick," he added, letting go the sheet. "That 's right. Now the jib—stop! It 's too late. Hang on for your life. Here she comes."

A furious blast struck the *Nautilus* on the star-board quarter. The little craft quivered and then wallowed in a welter of seething water. The jib gave a crack like a mighty whip, one rope tore away, and the canvas flapped madly as it hung over the side. Tempest gave one glance at it, decided nothing could be done to make it secure in such an emergency, and crawled to the Kanaka's side. At all costs they had to keep the boat running before the wind. She was slewing round desperately, spun by the corkscrew action of the growing waves. In an incredibly short space of time the whole surface of the ocean had become a smother of white, boiling crests, with yawning valleys of water between them. At one moment the trim little *Nautilus* was buried down, down, with great swirling walls on every side. Then she

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climbed, stern first, up the side of an endless hill of green, pausing dizzily at the crest and careening over perilously under the pressure of wind.

Instead of moderating, the gale grew steadily worse, and both Dave and Tempest thought their end was approaching. There seemed no possible hope of the *Nautilus* keeping afloat. A dozen times she was on the verge of being swamped but always struggled bravely to right herself.

"It's my fault, lad," Tempest said, gripping the boy's hand. "I ought to have had more sense."

Dave's face was white. He looked a little older at that fearful moment. It was terribly hard to have to lie there, braced up against a seat, and do nothing but wait.

"Nobody could have known this was coming," he said quietly.

For about half an hour the storm lashed the surface of the sea with unbridled fury, and then, with startling suddenness, the wind dropped. Temp-

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est did not trust this latest antic of the gale. There was something majestic and awe-inspiring about the turbulent water without a breath of wind blowing. He cast an eye at the jib, which now swung like a pendulum as the *Nautilus* rocked. At any minute the storm might smash down on them again.

“You stop there,” he said to the boy; and made his way for’ard to save the sail while the chance lasted. He had barely accomplished this when the treacherous wind struck the *Nautilus* once more. It seemed, however, to have spent most of its energy. Warily Tempest made his way to a locker and began fumbling in it for a sea-anchor which he remembered was there.

“We may win out yet,” he said to Dave, with a return of his old optimism, as he attached a few yards of rope to the canvas bag and heaved it over the bow. The steadying effect of the dragging bag was noticeable immediately, keeping the craft head on with its resistance.

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After that there remained nothing to do but let the gale wear itself out. It was impossible to get anything to eat or drink, for the little craft never stopped dancing crazily. It was very near sunset when there came a marked moderation of the wind.

"Put um sail up bimeby," commented Jim.

"You 've said it," agreed Tempest. "The worst is over, and it 's getting better all the time. This is where we thank our lucky stars, if we have any. I don't mind admitting now that I did n't expect to be alive by night. What do you say, Jim?"

Jim shrugged his shoulders. Whatever his feelings were he was not in the habit of exhibiting them.

"We have some grub now, eh?" he said.

With this practical suggestion the others heartily agreed. Now that immediate danger was past they felt half starved.

During the day Tempest had constantly kept an eye on his compass, and he calculated that they

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must have been blown a dozen or more miles off their course. The first thing to do was to take a reef in the main sail and get back in the proper direction. A tremendous groundswell was running, but the water was no longer broken. The *Nautilus* bumped and thudded her way through it heavily, shaking her occupants like peas in a pan; but Tempest was able to keep her running until dawn, by which time he considered they must be arriving somewhere near their destination. Two islands loomed up during the forenoon, and after a careful consultation of the chart it was decided that these probably lay to the north of the one which they were seeking.

Tempest bent his course south accordingly, and was greatly elated a few hours later to pick up the outline of land.

CHAPTER XX

SHOTS FROM THE BEACH

IT was Jim, as usual, who first caught sight of it, and Dave looked at it for a long time through the binoculars, full of wonder and hope. Either they were doomed to disappointment or this was the mysterious place that they had struggled so persistently to reach.

"I 'd give something to know just what happened to the *Firefly* in that gale," he said, turning to Tempest.

"So would I," was the reply. "They had their full share of it, you may be certain, but, as we weathered it, it 's most likely that they did the same unless an unlucky wave flopped on board and foundered them."

"If that is Lost Island, I suppose we shall soon

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have a fair idea what happened to Joe Flagg," said Dave.

"You can wager your last cent on that. If they haven't got ashore there by now they never will step ashore anywhere on this earth. It'll be a comical situation, anyway, to meet them. I can almost hear Flagg already saying 'Dear me, what a surprise! Now, when I was in Dogtooth City—' "

Another hour brought the *Nautilus* so close that it was possible to get a fair notion of the island's appearance through the glasses. Both Dave and Tempest were filled with suppressed excitement. There certainly was a prominent hill there, which might have been cast up by volcanic action, but from where they lay it bore no resemblance to either a camel or any other animal.

Dave spoke of that fact in disappointed tones.

"Shucks! What of it?" said Tempest encouragingly. "You don't know where the lagoon is yet, if there is one there. Probably you can't see

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the resemblance except from that side. Patience, sonny. It is early yet to give up hope. Wait till we get closer in and then we will make a little trip right round the place on the look-out for zoological specimens like camels."

There were many dangerous rocks, some of them only half submerged, when they got within a mile of the coast, making navigation a hazardous business. Tempest placed Jim in the bow on the look-out for snags, and decided to beat his way round the northern point of the island. More than once a warning shout from the Kanaka only just saved them from tearing out the bottom of the *Nautilus* on a jagged peak; and it was a relief when they got round to the western side to find the water there clear of such death-traps.

All the time Dave's eyes were glued on the crag-strewn hill, on which he sought feverishly to distinguish something remotely resembling a camel.

"Gee," exclaimed Tempest at last, "if there is n't a lagoon down there I'll eat my hat! We

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shall be able to make sure on that point soon, anyway."

"The camel, Tempest! The camel!" Dave shouted a few minutes later as they got farther to the south. "Don't you see it?"

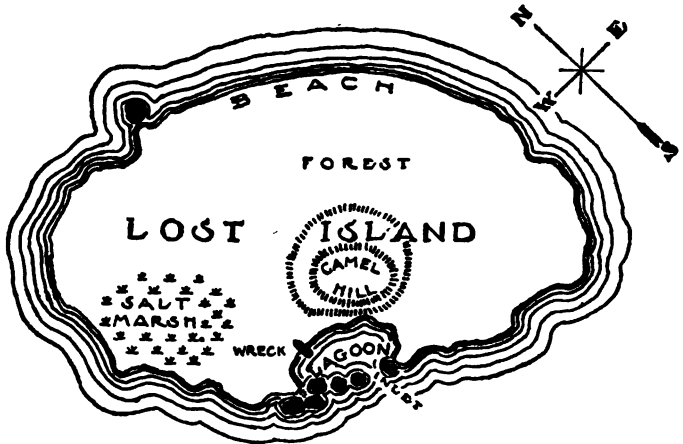
"It's a funny sort of camel," the other commented with a dry smile. "Wait till we get a bit down the coast. It may show up a little clearer then."

"It *is* the camel, Tempest. Look! Look!" Dave cried as the formation of the hill gradually resolved itself into the shape he was looking for. The resemblance was by no means perfect. Its most noticeable feature was the lump in the middle. Further behind there was a rising sweep which might roughly be spoken of as the hind quarters of the animal. The shoulders were fairly distinct, and also the rise of the neck, but there was no head.

"Great guns and little fishes, Dave, but you're right! We're there at last. Now, where the

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dickens is the entrance to this lagoon? We don't want a smash up now after all our trouble. Jim, you tinted heathen, how do you reckon we can get in?"



The Kanaka stood up and surveyed the reef of rocks which formed the lagoon.

"Maybe p'raps over there," he said, pointing. "Go easy."

The islander's instinct proved right. He directed Tempest to the only channel leading into the calm water beyond the reef.

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"You 've never seen this place before, I suppose, have you, Jim?" Tempest asked.

The Kanaka nodded.

"Never been on him though. He called Tai-o-Vai. Used to sail past sometimes long time ago."

"Tai-o-Vai, eh?" said Dave. "Why did n't you tell us so before?"

"You did n't ask him, idiot," laughed Tempest. "Probably he 's never seen a camel in his life, so it 's no use pulling off that stunt. Jiminy! but is n't this one pretty lagoon?"

Dave did not answer. They were just rounding a bend and the boy put one hand on Tempest's shoulder, pointing with the other.

"As I live," Tempest exclaimed, "it's the remains of the old *Hatteras* after all!"

The wreck lay embedded in the sand, just as the ancient mariner had described it in Brooklyn so long ago. She was not in an excellent state of preservation, but the mere sight of her gladdened the hearts of the adventurers.

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Tempest pulled the tiller over and turned the nose of the *Nautilus* straight towards the remains of the old barque. They were within about four hundred yards of her when the sharp crack of a rifle echoed over the water, and a bullet skimmed the surface uncomfortably near.

"Somebody is at home!" said Tempest with a puzzled expression. "I suppose that is just to show us how pleased they are to see us."

He jibed the boat, which then lay with her sails flapping.

"It 's Flagg," Dave suggested.

"Dear old Joe Flagg, late of Dogtooth City," Tempest muttered. "And he sent that bullet as a present. The old villain was n't drowned in that gale, Dave."

"What are you going to do now?" the boy asked. "We're not going to turn tail at this stage."

"If Mr. Flagg imagines that one shot from a pop-gun is going to keep us off he never made a

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bigger mistake in his life," Tempest said. "But as it is a question of life and death, when people are throwing lead around, we'd better come to an understanding. I know you're no coward, Dave, but I don't want to take chances without you agreeing. What do you say?"

"I 'm game for anything," said the boy. "Perhaps he only intended to frighten us off. He would hardly be likely to shoot us in cold blood when we got near, would he?"

"Jim, your skin is as precious to you as ours is to us," Tempest said. "Are you agreeable to running the risk of looking like a sieve?"

"Sieve?" the Kanaka repeated without understanding.

"There's a kindly disposed gentleman over there who wants to make little holes in us with a gun, and he may do so if we go much nearer. But we particularly do want to go nearer. Do you mind?"

Jim shrugged his shoulders.

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“Good enough,” said Tempest. “Now, Joe Flagg, we ’ll just see a little further into this matter. I ’ll have a word with you if it kills me.”

He brought the boat round and she moved once more towards the wreck. There was no sign of any human being ashore. The *Nautilus* ran another hundred yards without interruption before the crack of another shot rang out, and there was a splash sixty feet ahead of them.

“Keep your heads ducked well down, boys,” said Tempest. “He could n’t shoot a haystack in a passage. If only we can get ashore we may be all right.”

They were twenty yards from the beach when a bullet crashed through the side of the *Nautilus* just above her water line, and grazed Jim’s leg.

At the same moment the form of Joe Flagg emerged from the trees. Holding his rifle up menacingly he advanced to meet the incoming boat.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Flagg,” greeted Temp-

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est. "You 're looking very well. Pretty scenery about here, is n't it."

"If you come any nearer I 'll shoot the lot of you," snarled the fat man. There was nothing urbane about his manner. The mask was off now.

"You 're not feeling very well, Mr. Flagg," said Tempest. "Perhaps you had a bad night's rest. I 'm afraid you 've had a long journey and you must be tired."

"This island is private property," snapped Flagg. "It 's mine, see? And I don't allow any trespassing. Keep off, or there 'll be a quick funeral."

"You 've bought it in a mighty hurry," replied Tempest. "You don't happen to have the title-deeds about you, do you? Now, don't try to be funny," he added sharply. "We 're a long way from civilization, but even in the middle of the Pacific you can't kill people with impunity. There 's a law against it, you know, Mr. Flagg."

"Dead men don't tell tales," Flagg snapped,

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“and I warn you you ’ll be as dead as mutton if you land here. It ’s my island, and I won’t have any one on it.”

“I hate to argue with you under the circumstances,” said Tempest, “but I ’m afraid I don’t believe that yarn. Now, listen, I ’ll make you a little business proposition.”

“What is it?” asked Flagg.

“We will assume that we are all here for the same purpose.”

“I ’m not here for my health,” said Flagg ungraciously.

“Precisely. You came after our treasure.”

“That ’s my business.”

“And it is mine too, Mr. Flagg,” said Tempest. “If I had a gun I should n’t feel inclined to be so amiable about it, either. However, I ’ll make you a sporting offer, to save further unpleasantness. You ’ve been very good to us at your home, even if you did finish up with a sneaking trick by trying

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to steal a march on us. Look here, I'll agree to give you a third of anything we may find."

"Nothing doing," replied Flagg without a moment's hesitation. He was perfectly aware that he held the trump card in his hand, and moreover he was not in the mood to accept anything less than the lot.

"Now be reasonable," Tempest urged. "We may have an awful lot of trouble before we get it, anyway, even if we ever do get it, and so we might just as well be friends instead of enemies. Because you don't think we're going to slip away quietly and leave you in possession of the field, do you?"

"I neither know nor care. Clear out."

"But I told you we were not going to clear out."

"That's up to you," said Flagg in level tones. "I'm tired of this. If you like getting shot that's your own affair."

Without further warning he pulled the trigger

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again, and a splinter jumped into the air from the gunwale of the *Nautilus*.

"You murderous old crook," shouted Dave.

"That's nothing. I'm only finding the range," Flagg said with a mirthless laugh, as the rifle spoke once more.

"It's no use committing suicide," muttered Tempest, swinging the boat round. "Good afternoon, Mr. Flagg. I hope you will take great care of your health until I see you again. I'm afraid you're not exactly in training, so I shall anticipate the pleasure of giving you the biggest wallop you ever had when I wade into you."

Flagg's reply, as the *Nautilus* began to gather speed, was another shot which ricocheted past.

"All right," Tempest shouted back over his shoulder. "You're only storing up trouble for yourself."

"Isn't he a nice, kind-hearted gentleman?" commented Dave. "Let's try to land somewhere on the other side of the island."

SHOTS FROM THE BEACH

"We can try," said Tempest, "but to tell you the truth I don't think we shall stand a dog's chance. That brute does n't mean to stop at anything. I believe he would polish the lot of us off without the slightest scruple. There was nothing playful about the way he handled that gun of his, you must remember. And I do hate being shot on a Tuesday. This is Tuesday, is n't it? The blooming island is so small that he can dodge round as fast as we can. However, we 'll fool him if we can. Here goes."

Tempest ran the boat straight out to sea until the sun dipped under the horizon. It was far from dark, for the stars were aggravatingly bright, and a full moon was soon due to appear on the scene.

"It 's a chance," Tempest said, as he headed once more for Tai-o-Vai, "but an extremely rotten chance. We 'll see what we can do at the back of the island now. I doubt whether we could land there anyhow because of the surf."

A slight haze partly obscured the moon when it

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rose, but there was far too much light to please Dave and Tempest, who would have liked a coal-black night for such work as they had on hand. Trusting to memory to avoid the dangerous patch of rocks through which they had threaded their way earlier in the day, they made a wide detour, and then headed straight for the surf. The thunderous roar of it reached them when they were still a quarter of a mile off.

"That sounds lively, does n't it?" Dave commented. "There 's no earthly hope of making the beach in that without smashing the *Nautilus* up and probably ourselves too."

"Jim," said Tempest, "you can see like a cat in the dark. Can you tell us how we 're going to get ashore?"

The Kanaka shook his head. That was a problem beyond him.

"Maybe p'raps there 's a li'le cove somewhere along here," he suggested. "Try bit furth'r down."

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"All right," said Tempest. "It 's rocky along here, and we can't see where we are going, so don't be surprised if we have to swim for it all of a sudden."

More by good fortune than by good management they escaped piling the boat up, and, sure enough, Jim piloted them to a sheltered cove.

" 'Pon my word, I believe we 've caught him napping, Dave," Tempest said as they approached the beach.

"There 's no sign of anybody," agreed the boy, eagerly scanning the shore.

They were within fifty yards—forty—thirty.

Crack!

A little spurt of light flashed out and a bullet sang its way over their heads.

Tempest ground his teeth. Had he been alone he would have made a dash for it. Reluctantly he put the helm over and swung the boat away again.

"That is one extra thump in the ribs he will get from me when we do meet," he said bitterly.

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"Hang me if I know what we are going to do now! We can't mess about like this indefinitely."

"He certainly has got us in a corner," said the boy.

"It is a corner we have got to wriggle out of, somehow," observed Tempest. "I think I've got a scheme that will work, though. It seems to me the only way. Desperate situations demand desperate measures. Dave, I want you to stop in the *Nautilus* whatever happens until I tell you to come ashore. I'm going to swim to the beach."

"And what then?"

"I'll deal with Flagg once I get on dry land with him. We'll go round to the lagoon, where the wreck is. That is the best place."

"But he'll shoot you the moment he sets eyes on you."

"He'll probably try to, but I'm going to take the risk. I may be able to take him off his guard."

"Um rain pretty soon, pretty hard," said the

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Kanaka, sniffing the air as they ran round to the lagoon. Clouds were already gathering.

“Tempest, let’s wait a while and see exactly what is going to happen. I’ve got an idea that we might be able to land after all, without your running an almost certain chance of getting hit with a bullet.”

A few heavy drops were beginning to fall, and the light was failing.

“If a regular tropical shower does come down, that will work the trick,” Tempest said.

Almost as he spoke the patter of the rain drops increased. They got through the channel into the lagoon just in time before the shower became a drenching storm, blotting everything out of sight.

“Now for it!” said Tempest. “Not a sound, boys!”

CHAPTER XXI

THE PARLEY

AS the keel grated on the beach they all sprang out. In spite of the danger they ran of being attacked any instant, Dave glowed with excitement at the idea of actually setting foot at last on the island.

“What about the boat?” he said.

“The tide is going down,” Tempest replied.

“She ’ll be all right for the present. Anyway, we can’t carry her.”

They took the precaution of carrying an anchor ashore and digging it into the sand, and then drifted like shadows through the bushes.

“Listen,” said Tempest, softly; “I took my bearings as well as possible, but we ’re working very blindly in the dark. I want to make for that

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hill. We shall be safest there. It will be mighty rough going, and you must look out that you don't break your necks. Stick together as much as you can. I grabbed a few biscuits before we left the boat. Goodness only knows when we shall get our next meal, but there 's no time to fool about with provisions now. Follow me, and don't call out unless you 're in trouble."

The next hour was like a nightmare to all three of them. Only desperate necessity drove them forward. Behind lay the possibility of being shot; somewhere in front stood a hill, the nature of which was unknown to them. Their only hope was to find some crevice which would not only provide shelter from the torrential rain, but also form a sort of stronghold. In broad daylight their task would not have been so difficult, but the darkness was intense, and Tempest had to feel his way with nothing to guide him toward his goal except memory, which was fast becoming confused in the maze of tangled undergrowth. So long as

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the ground seemed to be rising, Tempest felt fairly confident in spite of the baffling conditions, but at length, when he stumbled into a gully and scrambled out, thankful that no bones were broken, he had to confess himself beaten. He no longer knew north from south, east from west. He had tried to force a passage through an impenetrable cluster of trees and had utterly lost his sense of direction while turning and twisting.

On consulting the others he found them equally befogged. Even the Kanaka could only guess in which direction the hill lay, and an incorrect guess might prove dangerous.

“Well, here we are, and here we ’ll stop for the present,” said Tempest. “I fancy the rain is easing off a trifle. There isn’t much fear of Flagg prowling around in this particular spot with his pop-gun till it gets lighter, so we are safe as far as he is concerned. The moment we get a glimmer of the moon we can push on.”

Standing there, with the rain trickling down his

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neck and his clothing sticking to him uncomfortably, bewildered, and more than a little tired, Dave began to wonder for the first time whether treasure-hunting such as this was worth the trouble. The chance of success was extremely vague, anyway; and the difficulties immediately in front of them were sufficient to damp the ardor of any one. He almost felt at that moment that he could barter his share of the problematical treasure for a square meal and a sleep round the clock, in his own comfortable bed in far-away Brooklyn. He was fast becoming despondent when Bruce Tempest came to the rescue with his wonderful fund of cheerfulness.

"You're very quiet, sonny," he said. "I can't see you, but you don't sound as though you were enjoying this."

"It's exciting, anyway," said Dave.

"I'll wager you never got anything at the movies that thrilled you as much," Tempest declared. "Everything is real, this trip, including

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the rain. You will remember it as long as you live. 'Pon my word, I believe it 's getting a shade lighter! Don't you think so, Jim?"

"See to go ahead bimeby p'raps," the Kanaka responded. "Rain stop pretty soon."

As a weather-prophet, Jim was a wonder. Sure enough, the rain did ease off about half an hour later, and a pale light showed from a hazy moon. Tempest, however, could not make out much of their position, as they were hemmed in with trees.

"Goodness only knows how we got here," he said. "Jim, do you think you could nose around a bit and try to spot where that blessed hill is?"

Without a word the Kanaka disappeared, nor did he return for some time. Dave was beginning to wonder whether the man had got lost, and was on the point of suggesting that they should give a call to him, when Jim reappeared as silently as he had gone. The moon was growing more distinct every moment now.

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"Um hill over there," said Jim, pointing.
"Come round this way."

Leaving him to take the rôle of guide, Dave and Tempest followed, and after a while emerged from the trees. A few hundred yards away the hill towered, but the ascent was difficult enough, even though they could now see where they were putting their feet.

"Why, we must have wandered half-way round the island," said Tempest. "Jim, where is the lagoon?"

"Way across there, I think," the Kanaka replied, pointing.

"Well, all I can say is that it's a mercy we did n't blunder down to the beach where old Flagg is," Tempest commented. "We went round in a half-circle."

It took the trio nearly half an hour to reach the summit, but when they gained the top of the "camel's back" they were in a fine position for observation. Not far below them was the placid

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water of the lagoon, and the black hull of the *Hatteras* was plainly discernible. Here, too, they solved the mystery of the *Firefly's* whereabouts. They had wondered where Flagg had hidden her. Now they could see her moored behind the wreck, in such a position that she would not be observed by any one entering the lagoon.

"I wish I had brought my glasses," Dave said.

"You 'd only have lost 'em in the scramble," his companion commented. "Besides, we shall be able to see all we want in a few minutes. Those clouds are rolling away fast."

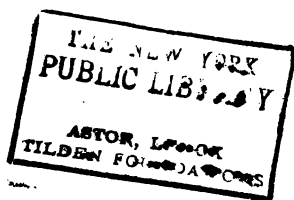
Half hidden behind a rock, the three peered down at the strange scene for some time. The rain had ceased altogether, and the sand glistened silvery in the moonlight.

Suddenly Dave took a quick inward breath, and his fingers tightened on the rock he was leaning against.

Stealthily, silently, three forms emerged from the shadow below, and moved in the direction of



Three forms emerged and moved in the direction of the *Nautilus*



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the *Nautilus*, which now lay awash, canting over slightly. Of the three forms it was easy to distinguish that of Joe Flagg.

"What 's their game now?" Dave asked, speaking in a low voice, as though afraid of being heard by those beneath, even at that distance.

"A little midnight exploration party of some sort," Tempest replied. "We 've got Flagg guessing, and he wants to be sure how things stand. He 's not getting much sleep, anyway, since we disturbed his operations. Look, they 're making a bee-line for our old tub, but what on earth they are after I cannot imagine, unless it is to make sure we are not on board."

"There is n't much there for them to steal," said the boy.

Tempest laughed softly.

"Flagg is n't that sort of a thief, lad," he observed. "It takes bigger things than what we have there to interest him. He is quite brainy, in a fashion. I guess they would tell us that in

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Dogtooth City, if we could ask them; but they have n't got any pleasant memories of him, you may be dead sure. No siree! Joe Flagg is up to some scheme, and I 'd give a lot to know what it is. He has the advantage over us for the moment, though. We can do nothing—except keep our eyes open."

Dave nodded. As a matter of fact it was all he could do to keep his eyes open, in spite of the mysterious manœuver that was going on under them.

Warily Flagg approached the *Nautilus*, and while he stood on guard with the rifle his two Kanakas climbed over the side.

"Good-by, binoculars!" muttered Dave.

"Good-by nothing!" was Tempest's rejoinder. "He may score here again, but the game is n't over yet. No, by jiminy, it 's only just beginning, Dave," he went on, warming up. "We 're all guessing now, but we 'll see who wins out in the long run. You can't argue much with a man who

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is holding up a loaded gun at you, and he knows it. So far that has been his one big advantage—that and the low cunning of sneaking off ahead of us. It's going to be a battle of wits, boy, and there's absolutely no telling what may happen, because he is foxy."

"We are three to three," Dave said.

"Three to three and a gun at present," Tempest corrected. "Great Mackerel! What are they doing with the *Nautilus*?"

The beach dropped at a sharp angle at the place where the boat had been left, so that in spite of the falling tide she still remained almost afloat. Flagg and his two assistants were putting their shoulders to her bow and heaving her off.

"They can't be going to cast her adrift," Tempest said, puzzled. "What would they gain by that?"

"They could starve us into accepting their terms," the boy suggested.

Instead of leaving the *Nautilus* to drift away

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onto the rocks, Flagg and his men climbed on board.

"See, they are taking her over toward the *Fire-fly*," said Tempest. "Well, they 've captured her fairly. Still another point in their favor. Dave, boy, the battle is not going well with us. It's about time for us to do a bit of scoring, but I shall feel like a piece of wet rag until I have had a good sleep. Jim, you did a bit of snoring yesterday. Do you think you could keep a watch on them while we turn in?"

"I sleep to-morrow," replied the Kanaka. "You sleep now."

He did not move from his position, leaning over the rock, while the others sought out a dry patch under a sheltering ledge; and like typical sailors they were both in the land of dreams a few moments later. It was broad daylight when they awoke, and the Kanaka still stood there like a statue.

With Dave at his elbow, Tempest looked down

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from their secure nook; and for the first time they were able to get a clear view of Tai-o-Vai. The peak on which they stood dominated the whole island, enabling them to obtain a wonderful panoramic view. The place was virtually oval in shape, sloping down gradually on three sides from the hill to the shore, and covered nearly from end to end with the impenetrable mass of trees which had proved such a formidable obstacle in the darkness. Beyond the trees the sea, now calm again, lapped the beach lazily. On the fourth side of the hill the slope was precipitous, forming almost a cliff, overlooking the lagoon cupped in its semicircle of rocks. No pathway led down that untrodden ground, but it was possible to scramble to the sea by taking a zigzag route.

“All is quiet in the enemy’s camp,” Tempest said. “There’s nobody moving about on the deck of the *Firefly*.”

“What puzzles me,” Dave said, “is why are they stopping here so long? Evidently they

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have n't found the platinum, or we should n't see their heels for dust. They must have made a fairly good search on the *Hatteras* by now."

"Surely!" Tempest agreed. "But Flagg must still have some hope, or he would have cleared out. The trouble is that we shall lose the game altogether if they do happen to strike the stuff while they are holding us off, for then they can put up their sails and leave us guessing worse than ever."

"The sooner we take a hand, the better, then," Dave said. "What about making another attempt to come to terms with the old villain?"

"It's worth trying," said Tempest. "At least we could n't lose anything. Let's hold a council of war. Jim, we want to have a little pow-wow with that nice kind gentleman down there with the pop-gun, but he's got a horrid temper, and he might forget himself and start shooting if he saw any of us. We won't trust him any more than he trusts us. What do you suggest?"

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Jim looked down thoughtfully at the scene below for a while.

"Um talk with Meester Flagg and no shooting, eh?" he said at last.

"You 've got the idea," said Tempest, encouragingly.

"Jim fix um up," he declared. "You come half-way down hill and wait."

"Don't you do anything rash, now," Tempest said. "We don't want to have him taking pot-shots at you."

The Kanaka grinned, which was the nearest he ever came to actually laughing. Without another word he began the descent, the others following. When they had gone within a hundred yards of the edge of the trees near the *Hatteras*, he motioned them to stop, and then he crept forward alone. While still hidden by the bushes he uttered a peculiar call, evidently intended to attract the attention of the other Kanakas.

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There was no response the first time, and Jim repeated the cry.

This time an answer reached them faintly through the trees.

Jim began to speak in his native tongue. The sounds were meaningless to Dave and Tempest, who could only listen and wonder. After a while Jim came back toward them and beckoned.

"Meester Flagg stand ashore without gun and talk if you no go too close," he reported. "If you go close, he 'll grab gun and shoot."

"Very amiable of him, I 'm sure," Tempest said, as they went down to the beach. "I take my hat off to you, Jim, all the same."

Flagg had come off the *Firefly* in a dory, near which he was standing. Evidently the rifle was lying in the boat ready for any emergency.

"You 're looking well this morning," Tempest greeted him. "Evidently this climate agrees with you."

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"I 've no time for fool talk," the other jerked back. "What have you got to say to me?"

"We just thought we should like to know how you are progressing."

"That 's my business," Flagg snapped.

"*Our* business, if you don't mind," Tempest corrected. "And really it is very generous of me to include you like that. Anyhow, I 'm willing to make one last offer to you. Let us work together on this job, and forget any unpleasantness there may have been, and split the proceeds into three."

"You 're in a nice position to dictate terms to me, are n't you?" Flagg sneered. "No, there is only one thing I will agree to."

"And that is?"

"I 've got your boat and your grub. I did n't ask you to come here. You can starve to death for all I care. You will do that pretty soon. The only alternative is that I 'll give your boat back to you if you clear right out."

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"I am afraid Dave Hallard and I have come too far to agree to that, Mr. Flagg," replied Tempest, striving to keep his temper under these difficult circumstances. "Are you sure I can't persuade you to change your mind?"

"That 's all I have to say on the subject," said Flagg.

"In that case, all I can do is to wish you a good morning. It is to be war to the finish. I'm sorry, because, to tell you the truth, I'm beginning to believe we're all on a wild goose chase."

"What makes you think that?" Flagg asked suspiciously.

"That is my business," Tempest responded, turning his back.

"You 'll sing another tune when your stomachs get empty," Flagg snarled after him, a remark which Tempest did not deign to answer.

"Back to our stronghold for the present, Dave," he said to the boy. "He 's as obstinate as a mule, and it would n't surprise me in the least if he tried

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to hunt us out and force us off the island at the point of the rifle."

"Did you mean that—when you said you thought we were all on a wild-geese chase?"

"Partly," Tempest replied. "As a matter of fact, things don't look too rosy, do they? But I really said it to see how he felt on the subject."

"He did look a bit sick," Dave commented.

CHAPTER XXII

A MIDNIGHT VENTURE

DAVE and Tempest were by no means cheerful when they regained their refuge on the hill. The last of the biscuits had already been eagerly devoured, and all three of them had an uncomfortable desire to attack a hearty meal. Thirst, also, was bothering them a good deal.

"Something has got to give way soon," Tempest said, "or else Flagg will have a complete walk-over."

"What a horrible thought!" Dave ejaculated. "And yet I don't see how we can live on the memory of a few biscuits for more than another forty-eight hours."

Tempest was leaning over the rock with his eyes glued on the *Hatteras*. Flagg and his assistants were doing something on the wreck, and sounds

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of hammering ascended—as though they were smashing woodwork. It was evident he meant to leave no stone unturned before abandoning his search.

“Sometimes I feel sorry I dragged you into this, Tempest,” the boy said. “It looks as if it were going to turn out a fizzle.”

“I ’m not sorry—yet,” Tempest replied. “I ’ll be able to tell you more about my feelings tomorrow. I ’m wondering whether that old villain really would shoot in cold blood if we went down there boldly and got busy on the *Hatteras*. It would be an exciting experiment.”

“Too exciting for me,” said Dave. “I don’t like the look in his eye when he ’s pointing the business end of that rifle at us. Yes, I ’m afraid he would shoot, because he knows it ’s a long way to the nearest policeman. He could polish us off without a soul being the wiser except his Kanakas, and at a pinch he could say it was done in self-defense.”

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"I 'm afraid it may come to that at the finish," said Tempest, grimly. "Personally, I have n't the least desire to have holes bored in me. A crazy sailor once put a bullet into my ribs, and it was a distinctly unpleasant experience. All the same, I don't see how anything can be done now but make an attack in force. Once I got hold of his firearms, I 'd make him dance. Whether we ever get any treasure or not, I should just love to come out on top in this deal, would n't you?"

"We might make a surprise attack somehow. I expect one of them is always on the lookout for something of the sort, though."

"A surprise attack is what I have been thinking of for hours," Tempest said. "But it 's a pretty difficult proposition, let me tell you. Jim, are you willing to take a bit of a risk? I 'll buy you anything in the wide world that you fancy, as soon as I can, if you 'll stand by me in this."

"What you do, Jim does," the Kanaka responded nonchalantly.

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“Good man! All we can do is to wait for an opportunity, and then we ’ll rush the citadel, so to speak. Not just now, however. It does n’t look to me as though it would be exactly healthy down there at the present minute.”

All day long the trio watched and waited, while the hammering and smashing on the wrecked *Hatteras* continued and the gnawing pangs of hunger grew steadily.

“I believe I could eat my shoes,” Dave said desperately toward evening of the longest day he could remember.

“You ’ll probably get all you want in the way of grub before morning, somehow or other,” Tempest replied. “We are staking everything on this next throw, you know. If we lose and don’t get hurt in the gun-play, we shall get our boat back, anyway. Flagg will be only too glad to see the back of us. If we win, we shall get our boat back just the same. So you can make up your mind to be ready for supper or a funeral.”

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At sunset Flagg and his Kanakas left the *Hatteras* and returned to the *Firefly* in their dory, one solitary figure remaining on deck on guard. An early moon lit up the scene distinctly—much too distinctly for Tempest's liking.

"Jumping Cæsar!" exclaimed Tempest, several hours later, "but I 've got a notion. Jim, you can swim like a fish, can't you? I have seen you doing stunts in the water that would make an otter green with envy. Thank goodness, I 'm fairly good myself at that game. There is one positive, certain thing, and that is that two of the men on that boat will be snoring like pigs about midnight. Two from three leaves one, or at least it did when I went to school. Dave, my son, I 'm afraid we shall have to leave you out of this little performance except as a spectator, though you 'll come in useful after the first stage. Jim, it is risky, but it is worth while under the circumstances. We will wait until the 'witching hour,' and then do our fish act. One of us may get potted in the

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excitement, and perhaps both of us, but we simply must do something, and this looks to me like a golden opportunity to catch Flagg napping."

As all remained quiet at midnight, the three descended the hill and made for the beach inside the lagoon, but a considerable distance away from the *Firefly*.

"Not a sound, mind!" Tempest cautioned. "Everything depends on being able to steal a march on them. I know you 're just burning to come along with us, Dave, but you couldn't do any good and two can do the thing more quietly than three. I want you to stop right here for about twenty minutes. I 'm afraid, if you move, you will be heard by their sentry, and the less alert he is the better. After a while you can creep through the edge of the trees until you are opposite the *Firefly*, and there ought to be something doing by then, though goodness only knows what it may be."

Stripped of their clothes, Tempest and Jim

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crawled down to the water's edge, taking advantage of a ridge of sand for cover most of the way. Dave stood watching, with his heart beating fast. This was the climax of their adventures, and he dreaded to think of the danger Tempest was running. He would have attempted to dissuade his friend from going, but Tempest was in no mood to brook interference. Nothing short of an earthquake would have held him back.

Sliding into the water like seals, the pair struck straight out, with the intention of making a wide detour, so that they could approach the *Firefly* from the seaward side. That, Tempest considered, would at least give them a better chance of reaching their goal without being detected. He was fully aware of the enormous odds that were against them—odds much greater than he had allowed Dave to suspect. Only desperate need had driven him to this undertaking. His chief fear was that they would be seen from the *Firefly*, and probably shot before they had a chance to board

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her. If they did happen to be lucky enough to get onto the boat unobserved, they would still have their work cut out. He knew he could depend on Jim to stand by him, whatever occurred, but two men, unarmed, were not likely to have much chance against Flagg and his crew if it came to a rough-and-tumble.

These thoughts raced through Tempest's brain as the pair glided along for the first ten minutes. When he considered it safe to turn they headed straight for the *Firefly*, and then the most hazardous part of the journey began. It was now more necessary than ever to exercise caution, for though the dark form of the Kanaka was almost invisible, Tempest's face gleamed in the moonlight occasionally. He swam under water as much as possible, coming to the surface only to take breath, and moving slowly so that scarcely a ripple marked their progress. It was eery work; and though Tempest was a brave man, a chill ran down his spine more than once when he reflected how prob-

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able it was that a bullet would be their greeting. One careless splash would be almost certain to attract the attention of the sentry on the *Firefly*, and Tempest did not like to think what an easy target his face would make.

The *Nautilus* lay anchored near the *Firefly*, and their object was to reach her safely first if possible. The suspense of the last stretch was terrible. The Kanaka now disappeared under the water for long distances, and showed little more than his mouth and nose when he came up again; but Tempest had not the marvelous skill of the South Sea Islanders. While completely submerged he progressed with powerful strokes, and he did not venture to take breath until his lungs seemed to be bursting.

He was never more thankful for anything in his life than when they reached the side of the *Nautilus*. Hanging on there, and taking a much needed rest, he listened intently before daring to make the next move. Not a sound reached his

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ears. With infinite caution he paddled round the prow and, grasping the cable of his boat, raised his head a trifle.

This nearly ended in his undoing. At the stern of the *Firefly* one of Flagg's Kanakas was squatting, his head resting on his hand. Across his knees was balanced the rifle which had hitherto kept the invading force at bay. This much Tempest took in at one lightning glance, when his hand slipped on the wet cable, and the Kanaka spun round as he heard the slight splash Tempest could not avoid making.

Like a stone the swimmer sank and made for shelter behind the *Nautilus*, with a dreadful fear that the lookout had seen him. The Kanaka, however, after staring with suspicion in the direction of the noise, came to the conclusion it must have been made by a fish, and settled down again to his long, monotonous vigil.

Tempest waited impatiently for a while, and then ventured to take another peep. The sentry

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did not appear to be particularly alert. On the contrary, it almost looked at that distance as though his head was nodding sleepily. Tempest held up a warning finger to Jim, motioned him to remain where he was, and glided through the water nearer to the *Firefly*. With infinite caution he placed his hands on the side of the boat and raised himself partly out of the water, until his face was within a few feet of the sentry.

The Kanaka was fast asleep at his post.

Tempest could hardly believe his good fortune. Quietly as a ghost he disappeared back into the sea, and swam to where Jim was waiting. At the far side of the *Nautilus* he gave his companion a few whispered instructions, and then the pair of them stole to the stern of Flagg's craft.

Inch by inch the two men raised themselves over the side, fearing to awaken the sleeping Kanaka with the slightest oscillation, but so carefully did they work that the boat hardly moved. The sentry was nodding peacefully when Tempest's hand

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closed over his mouth like a steel vise, and Jim gripped his legs.

The startled sentry instantly began to struggle, but he could only squirm. Tempest had him by the throat, and his fingers tightened. The terrified Kanaka showed no sign of submission. So far there had scarcely been a sound, but it would not have needed much of a scuffle to bring the other two on the scene. Tempest had no intention of choking the sentry. The situation was extremely critical, when Jim wrested the rifle away and gave the victim a blow on the head with the butt end.

The sentry collapsed, unconscious, and Tempest stood motionless for a while, listening to see if the sound of the blow had disturbed the others. There was no sign of movement, however, in the little cabin, so the unconscious Kanaka was lowered over the side, and Tempest and Jim towed his form to the beach. Dave appeared out of the shadows and approached them.

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"You have n't killed him?" the boy asked anxiously in a whisper.

"No. You keep guard over him. Thump him on the head with a rock or something if he gets too lively. We may have our hands quite full enough with the others. Come on, Jim, quick as you like."

While Dave stood on guard over the captive, Tempest and Jim swam off again to the *Firefly* and regained her deck as silently as before. Flagg's bunk was in the cabin just forward of the cockpit. An oil lamp was burning, and by its light Tempest could see the form of their arch enemy reclining in his bunk. Within reach of the sleeping man lay a revolver, which glistened in the rays of the lamp. At the far end of the cabin was a door, evidently leading to the place where the other Kanaka was asleep.

With Jim at his heels, Tempest took a step forward.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SKELETON IN THE SAND

ADVANCING on tiptoes, Tempest stretched out his hand to gain possession of the revolver, and his fingers were almost closing on it when one of the flooring boards creaked. Flagg, who had evidently been slumbering lightly, stirred uneasily. Casting caution to the winds, Tempest reached forward impulsively, bumping against a table as he did so.

With a startled exclamation, Flagg half raised himself in his bunk, but by that time the weapon was in the other man's hand, and the muzzle was pointing straight between Flagg's eyes.

"Don't move an inch!" Tempest said in a voice which carried conviction. "Jim, fasten that door. We'll bottle up the other Kanaka till this gentleman has thoroughly grasped the situation."

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"That—that thing 's loaded," gasped Flagg, beginning to regain his self-possession after the shock of being so rudely awakened.

"I suspected the fact," said Tempest. "And just because it is loaded, you will be more reasonable."

"Well, don't point it at me. It might go off."

"It not only might, but it will if you make a move. Jim, see if you can find any more rifles or six-shooters around."

Jim turned out lockers and ransacked pockets, but was unable to find anything except a box of cartridges, of which Tempest immediately took possession.

"Now," said the latter, "the game is up, as far as you are concerned."

If looks could have killed, Tempest would have been a dead man. Flagg, however, had wonderful control over himself, and his expression altered.

"We 've all come on a fool's errand, Tempest,"

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he said, in tones that were intended to be ingratiating. "There may have been treasure here at one time, but there is n't now."

"All the more reason why you can scoot back to Washington Island at top speed with an easy mind," was the uncompromising reply.

"Of course, there 's always a chance, if we searched long enough—"

"You 've had your chance, Flagg, and you took it dishonorably. You won't get another until we have had ours."

"But could n't we all work together? It 's a bigger job than you seem to think." The man still, apparently, cherished the hope that the *Hatteras* treasure might be located.

"Listen to me," said Tempest. "I did intend, if ever I got this opportunity, to give you the biggest hiding you ever heard of. You deserve it—and worse. I 'm not sure I should n't be doing a kindness to you by teaching you a lesson. You 're a sneak, Flagg, a low sneak-thief. I have felt like

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punching your fat head until you cried for mercy. But now that you are where I can do it, I won't soil my hands on you. A bullet is more the sort of medicine you need," he added, suddenly warming up and pushing the muzzle of the revolver within an inch of the man's forehead.

Flagg squirmed. For a moment fear showed in his eyes.

"Bah!" said Tempest. "You're a chicken-hearted old scoundrel, after all, when it comes to a pinch, and when you are n't holding the gun. See, I'll give you ten minutes to clear out. Jim, take the dory ashore, and bring off the Kanaka. You need n't be afraid of leaving us alone. I've got something here that will keep our friend quiet."

Jim rowed to the beach and there found Dave standing on guard over his prisoner, with a stout piece of driftwood in his hand. The man had recovered, but was lying still, evidently realizing that the boy had him at a disadvantage,

"What's happened?" Dave asked eagerly.

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"Meester Flagg going for li'le trip," Jim replied. "He take this feller with him."

Dave ordered the prisoner forward, and the trio pushed off again in the dory. They found Tempest, as Jim had left him, still master of the situation.

"Say good-by to Mr. Flagg, Dave," Tempest observed quizzically. "He is just about to take a sea voyage for his health, and you may not see him again."

"Sorry he can't stop," said the boy, dryly. "Why, we were just beginning to like him! Say, Tempest, I don't want to interfere with the program, but the sooner I get some grub, the sooner I shall begin to forgive him."

"Righto. A pleasant journey, Flagg. And let it be clearly understood that if we see you hanging around here again, I 'll shoot in dead earnest. Savvy?"

Flagg had been lying on his back, apparently accepting the situation now as one in which he was

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hopelessly beaten. Neither his cunning nor his tenacity, however, had deserted him. As a last desperate resort he made a sudden grab to wrest the revolver from Tempest's hands, knowing that if the move succeeded he would turn the tables again. His wrist was powerful, but fortunately the other man was half expecting some such trick. He bent the weapon down, involuntarily tightening his pressure on the trigger as he did so. There was a deafening explosion, and a bullet bored its way through the bottom of the bunk, missing Flagg by the breadth of a finger.

Flagg sank back limply.

"I give in," he murmured. "Let me get out of this."

"You 'd better," said Tempest. "If that had killed you, it would have been your own fault. Jim, Dave, hop into that dory. Take the rifle with you. Now, Flagg, you 're to make a start as soon as we get off this boat, see? If you don't, I shall begin boring holes in it."

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But Mr. Flagg was thoroughly subdued, and the sails of the *Firefly* began to flutter without the slightest delay.

"I don't think he will come back, somehow," Tempest commented as the craft passed through the channel and into the open sea. "All the same, we must keep our eyes skinned. But for the love of Mike, let 's get something to eat."

Nothing had been disturbed in the *Nautilus*. Even Dave's cherished binoculars were exactly where he had left them. In a few minutes the trio were ravenously devouring a meal and regaling themselves with steaming cups of coffee, after which they took turn and turn about in keeping watch until dawn.

As soon as it was light, Dave and Tempest paid their first long-deferred visit to the *Hatteras*, and the boy's face fell as he scrambled onto the ruins of the bark. The ravages of time had not left much of her framework. Her hull was more or less intact, being embedded deeply in sand which

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had silted around her. In places her deck had caved in, and most of the woodwork had either been rotted or washed away. Flagg had evidently been breaking away timbers in the neighborhood of the poop, endeavoring to reveal any locker which might contain the platinum, but the task did not seem to have been a very promising one.

Tempest scratched his head and pulled a wry face.

"It 's no use spoiling the ship for a penn 'orth of tar," he said lugubriously. "Now that we are here, we might as well finish the search; but it 's pretty clear that this is n't where we get rich quick, eh, Dave?"

Though their hopes had now dwindled down to zero, they worked hard throughout that day and the following one without the slightest encouragement. With an immense amount of labor they dug into a cavity which appeared to have been the captain's cabin, and cleared it of tons of sand. They came across sundry half-decayed articles,

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and tore away the covers of one or two lockers, the contents of which had all nearly rotted.

By the end of the second day it was obvious that there remained no reasonable prospect of recovering the lost platinum from the wreck.

"It 's no good," said Tempest, taking a seat on one of the ship's old ribs and lighting his pipe. "We 've had a run for our money, and that 's about all we can say. I 've no regrets, and I hope you haven't either, Dave. It was a sporting chance, and a good one at that, so far as we could judge. You don't get a good sporting chance every day of your life. Poor old Jim, here, gets the thin end of it, because we can't pay him any wages at all. I 'm sorry for that, because he has been a brick."

Jim shrugged his shoulders. He did not seem to feel that the others were under any obligation to him.

"Well, we 'd better make a move for Washington Island, I suppose," Dave observed lugubri-

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ously. "We can't spend the rest of our lives here."

Jim was scanning the sky and the horizon carefully.

"Better stop here to-night," he said. "Pretty rough bimeby. Big wind coming."

"Bother you, Jim! No, I won't say that. You're a great weather-prophet, though how in thunder you know there's going to be a storm without looking at a barometer is more than I can tell. I guess you feel it in your bones. The sky certainly did look a bit angry as the sun went down, but nothing very special. Let's get back to the *Nautilus*. Good-by, *Hatteras*! Sorry there's nothing doing, but you certainly have provided us with an interesting trip, if not a particularly profitable one."

Dave looked back regretfully at the old wreck as he left her for the last time. He was disappointed, not so much on his own account as on

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that of his father, whom he had so much hoped to cheer with visions of wealth. With Tempest, the matter seemed to have been already forgotten. He was laughing as gaily as though such a thing as a treasure-hunt had never been suggested to him.

Before it was time to turn in for the night the storm that Jim had prophesied began to put in an appearance. Dark clouds raced across the sky, and sudden gusts of wind screamed through the rigging of the *Nautilus*.

"No need to keep a lookout for Flagg to-night," Dave commented, with mingled emotions. "He could come and camp here as long as he liked now, so far as we are concerned. If he has n't got back to Washington Island yet, he will be having a rough night."

"Plenty more wind coming," declared Jim.

"If that is so, I 'm glad I 'm not out in the open sea in a twenty-five-foot boat," observed Tempest. "A lagoon like ours is a blessing under such cir-

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cumstances. Dave, I have a fancy for a stroll on the shore to-night. Coming? It will be the last time we shall tread on Tai-o-Vai."

They all three dropped into the dory and paddled to the beach. There was no rain, and the great camel's back sheltered them from the wind. They had not landed five minutes, however, before the gale switched round with startling suddenness, and a fierce blast, coming straight in from over the lagoon, nearly knocked them off their feet and enveloped them in a whirl of fiercely driven sand.

"Gosh!" Tempest shouted, endeavoring to wipe some of the grit out of his eyes. "Now who 'd have expected that? It's a regular typhoon. Looks to me as though we were going to have some difficulty in getting back to the *Nautilus*."

"Plenty more wind bimeby," said Jim, impassively.

"If it gets much worse, it 'll blow the blooming island away," complained Tempest. "Ouch! Here comes another dose of sand!"

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This time the storm burst on them with all its force, and they staggered in the overwhelming cloud of fine sand which beat savagely on their backs, filled their hair, ears, mouths and clothing, and left them temporarily blinded, although instinctively they covered their eyes with their hands. Dave stumbled and fell, but Tempest dragged him to his feet again. Grasping the boy's shoulder, and keeping his own back to the force of the blast as much as possible, he forced his way in the direction of the trees. It was like moving in a nightmare, for he could only guess vaguely in which direction that shelter lay. He called hoarsely to Jim, but his voice was swallowed up in the roar of the gale. Sometimes falling, himself, and regaining his feet with difficulty, he pushed grimly on. It seemed a long while before he felt the low bushes on the outskirts of the wood brushing against his legs. They gave him renewed hope. Unable to see a thing, he forced his way under the trees, dragging Dave, and at length,

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having struggled a little way into the timber, sank down panting, and choking with sand.

They lay there well over an hour before the force of the storm decreased, and then, having recovered somewhat, began to shout for Jim. Presently they heard an answering call, and the Kanaka came toward them through the trees. As soon as he had lost sight of the others he, too, had sought shelter.

"For goodness' sake, don't say it's going to blow harder soon, Jim," said Tempest.

"Pretty near finished," replied the Kanaka. "Fine again quick."

Like most sudden tropical storms, it died down rapidly, and before long the island was bathed again in radiant moonlight, without a breath of air stirring. Only the thunder of the surf on the outer reef, and curious shallow cavities dug in the silvery sand by the whirling wind, remained to show how terrific had been the force of the storm. In places, whole stretches of beach had been

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scooped away, to be piled up farther on like drifts of snow.

Dave and Tempest surveyed this strange effect of nature in her angriest mood.

"Gee, but it is a wonder we came out of that alive!" said Tempest, thankfully.

Dave did not answer for a moment. He was leaning forward a little, with his eyes fixed on an object which protruded through the sand in one of the excavations left by the gale far above high-water mark, at the edge of the trees. The object gleamed like a streak of silver in the moonlight. Prompted by curiosity, he stepped down toward it. An instant later he called to his friend, his voice sharp with restrained excitement:

"Tempest! Come here! It's—it's a skeleton!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE PRIZE IS WON

“**T**HAT ’S queer!” Tempest exclaimed, coming to his side and prodding aimlessly into the bank of sand with his foot. “It must be some poor beggar who died here after the *Hatteras* came to grief.”

“Sure to be,” agreed the boy, quietly. “I wonder if he—if it happened when he was alone. Why, here ’s a piece of timber—a beam!”

He scooped the sand away with his hands, and revealed another beam running parallel with the first one.

“It looks like a hut that has been covered over with sand,” said the boy.

“That ’s it, sure enough,” agreed Tempest. “I wonder how long this chap existed after he

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was marooned. Ugh! It's gruesome. Let's get back on board."

They found the *Nautilus* had dragged her anchor in the storm and nearly been beached; but she was unharmed, and they soon had her back in her old moorings. Shortly after midnight the trio were asleep, with only the moon to watch peacefully over the dead, the living, and the scene of Tai-o-Vai's unsolved mystery. Dave slept fitfully, however, the events of the last few days crowding into his brain every time he awoke. He tossed and turned in his narrow bunk, thinking of what might have been the fate of Flagg in the storm, wondering when he would set foot in Brooklyn again, guessing what secret the skeleton might reveal if it could but speak, and above all trying to imagine what could have happened to the treasure that had vanished from the *Hatteras*, for vanished it obviously had. At last, weary in mind and body, he dozed off, and did not awaken until broad daylight.

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It was a rather subdued party that sat down to their last breakfast in the beautiful lagoon of Tai-o-Vai. Jim was, as usual, apparently immersed in his own thoughts and uncommunicative. The reaction after the recent excitement had left even Tempest quiet. He kept casting a professional eye at the sky, and seemed engrossed only in the thought of their long run back. Dave glanced occasionally in the direction of the silvery beach. His grey eyes were thoughtful. This was the end of their adventures, and the least satisfactory part of them because it involved failure. And failure was a thing which rankled in the minds of all the Hallards. Like his father and his grandfather, Dave hated to be beaten, whatever object he had set his mind on.

"You look mighty pensive, sonny," Tempest observed, dipping a hard biscuit into his coffee and munching it. "Always remember there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it."

"It's not the size of the fish I am concerned

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about, so much as losing it," the boy replied. "Tempest, I 'm really sorry now that I ever mentioned this rotten treasure to you. You 've been fine right through. I do wish you could have got a fortune out of it."

"A fortune!" said his friend. "I 'd be as miserable as a yellow pup with a tin can tied to its tail if I had a fortune."

"Well, half of what we might have found, anyway," said Dave.

"That would have depended on the amount of the treasure," mused Tempest. "If I had a lot of money, I should be unhappy till it was all gone except about five thousand dollars. That 's the share of the treasure I should have taken—just enough to let me settle down on a small farm in South Carolina where I was reared. I would n't have touched another penny, not only because I should n't want it, but because I should n't feel I had any right to accept more. You see, I 'm only one of your crew, the same as Jim, really. How-

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ever, that 's neither here nor there now. When you 're quite ready we will make a move. There 's a fair breeze."

Dave, however, was not inclined to hurry away.

"I can't get the idea of that hut out of my mind," he said slowly.

"What about it?"

"Well, suppose some of the people off the *Hatteras* got ashore here, don't you think they would have made an effort to fetch the platinum off the bark as soon as they had a chance?"

"Why, yes, I suppose they would," agreed Tempest, wrinkling his brows. "I 've thought of that already. Even at this minute it may be buried somewhere on Tai-o-Vai, but we 're not out exactly on a mining expedition. You are not proposing digging all over the island, are you?"

"No, Tempest," said Dave, seriously, "but I surely would like to see exactly what there is in that hut. It would n't take us very long to dig it out, would it?"

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“Certainly not. I ’m game. Let ’s take the shovels ashore and get to work.”

Tempest had not much faith in the new venture, and he worked more to satisfy the boy’s curiosity than anything else. Prior to the storm, sand had evidently sifted over the hut to a considerable depth, but the upheaval had made the task of the treasure-hunters easier. The roof of the hut was now covered with only a couple of feet of sand, and this they cleared off quickly. The next problem was to find the entrance, and this involved much hard work, but eventually they found an opening. For over an hour they delved steadily, gradually emptying the place, after digging a hole and placing the skeleton in it.

There was but little to reward their search—a few rusty tins, the handle of a knife, and the case of a silver watch, blackened with age.

“It looks to me like a place built for one man,” commented Tempest, during a momentary pause in their labors.

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"It may have been the man who owned the platinum," said Dave.

"More than likely. I can quite imagine that if he did land with the stuff, and the crew wanted to make Christmas Island in an open boat, he might prefer to stop on dry land with his blessed treasure until they sent a steamer of some kind to pick him up."

"If that 's what did happen," said Dave, "the dory they went off in must have been lost, and that accounts for nobody ever hearing what happened to the *Hatteras*."

"'Pon my word, Dave, you 're getting me quite excited about the thing again!" declared Tempest. "It 's only a theory, but it fits in with the facts perfectly. I don't know who the chap was who died here, but I do wish he 'd been considerate enough to leave a message of some sort corked up in a bottle, giving us instructions how to find his old treasure."

"Perhaps he did," said Dave. "Anyway, let 's

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go on till we get the cabin emptied of sand. If we don't find anything, then we will chuck it."

Again they plied the shovels vigorously, until nothing remained within the bare walls of the rudely constructed cabin.

"That settles it," commented Tempest, at last. "Now are you satisfied, Dave?"

"I suppose so," said the boy ruefully, straightening his back and resting on his shovel. "There 's nothing more to be done, is there?"

"No, I 'm afraid this is the finish. Not even the message in a bottle to lure us on."

"But," Dave exclaimed, with a touch of impatience, "what the dickens can the man have done with the platinum? He could n't eat it."

"Buried it somewhere, I guess. People generally do bury treasure, you know."

"Maybe he buried it under the floor here," said Dave, casually digging his shovel deep into the sand. There was a metallic click as the steel struck something hard.

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“Gosh! That ’s funny!” the boy exclaimed, looking round at his friend as he lifted out the sand on the shovel. “Tempest, do you suppose—”

“Rock, I expect,” said Tempest, not waiting a second, however, before he too had his shovel at work on the same spot.

“Rock be hanged!” shouted Dave, a moment later, as the unmistakable sound of metal striking metal reached their ears. “Tempest, it can’t be—it can’t be—”

“Can’t it, though!” replied Tempest, joyously. “It ’s a metal-bound box, or my name ’s Joe Flagg. Now don’t get so excited. Wait a minute till we get it out.”

Dave was excited, however—wildly excited. He and Tempest fell on their knees and tugged at the box, but its weight was considerable, and they could not lift it out until Jim gave them a hand. It was a small chest made of oak or some other

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hard wood, encircled with solid bands of iron which had almost rusted through in places. The woodwork was in a fair state of preservation.

"It 's the treasure—it 's the treasure!" Dave sang out gleefully.

"Well, if it is n't, it ought to be," said Tempest, trying in vain to prize off one of the metal bands with his shovel. "Jim, streak to the *Nautilus* for an ax—a couple of axes—a dozen—before I burst!"

The Kanaka shot across the water in the dory, and returned in a few minutes.

Even with the aid of an ax it was not easy to burst the chest open, for there were hinges and a lock to force, beside the iron bands.

At last, with a creak, the lid was lifted, and Dave and Tempest stared at the contents of the box, fascinated.

Lying neatly stacked in rows were bars and bars of silvery-white metal which, in spite of their long

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burial in the sand, shone as brightly as when placed there years before by the man who had mined and molded them.

Tempest laughed at the Kanaka's comical expression of disappointment. He had evidently expected something much more exciting. Dave stooped and took one of the small bars in his hand with a curious thrill.

"You don't suppose it's just—just lead or something like that?" he asked anxiously. "It's frightfully heavy!"

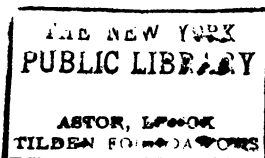
"It would be," answered Tempest, striving to keep the excitement from his voice. "It's platinum all right, and it's worth a fortune, Dave."

"A fortune!" repeated the boy, gazing down in awe at the serried rows of silvery bars. "Yes, it must be, for it's worth more than a hundred dollars an ounce. Tempest, we—we're rich!"

"*You* are," said Tempest. "All I'll accept is that five thousand for my little farm in Carolina.



Tempest laughed at the Kanaka's comical expression of disappointment



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Gee! I never saw anything that pleased me so much in all my life!"

He weighed the bar in his hand.

"There 's a good sixteen ounces in that, I fancy: maybe more," he added. "Let 's see how many bars there are."

With trembling fingers they laid the metal out on the sand, counting as they did so.

"Twenty-seven!" they said at last in chorus.

"Over four hundred ounces, sure as you 're alive!" Tempest added. "I reckon it must be worth between forty and forty-five thousand dollars altogether, if it 's worth a cent!"

"Goodness!" Dave exclaimed. "Enough to buy back my dad's place ten times over."

Three pairs of eyes were staring from the *Nautilus* at an old tramp steamer which, two days later, had overhauled the little sailing-boat in a dead calm.

"That 's a stroke of luck," said Tempest, while

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the vessel was bearing down upon them. "Somehow, I don't fancy Mr. Cresswell will ever get his *Nautilus* back after all."

"What are you going to do?" Dave asked.

"Do? Why, I 'm going to heave this treasure on to that tramp steamer and sit on it till we reach civilization."

"What about the *Nautilus*?"

"Let her go adrift. She isn't worth much, anyhow, and Mr. Cresswell will be the surprisedest man living when he receives a check for five hundred dollars—or make it a thousand, if you like, for overweight. We owe him a debt of gratitude."

The steamer was now within a cable's length of them, with her engines stopped. A dozen faces appeared over her rail.

"You look lonely there. Want any help?" called a deep voice.

"Glad of a passage," Tempest replied, as a rope ladder was slung over the side. "Lower a

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rope, will you? There 's a box here I 'd like to take along with me."

The crew of the *Seven Seas* stared with curiosity as the trio scrambled on board. One sees strange things in those lonely waters, but not often such a strange thing as two men and a boy at the mercy of the waves in a cockle-shell of a boat.

"Been on a little pleasure-trip?" asked the captain, coming forward with a smile.

The engines had already started again, and the *Nautilus*, left to her doom, was dropping astern.

"Shipwrecked," Tempest replied briefly. "Much obliged to you for picking us up, Cap'n. May I ask where you are bound?"

"Frisco the next stop. We 've got a pretty full crew, but I don't doubt we can keep you busy till we hit America."

Tempest exchanged glances with Dave, and laughed.

"I think, sir," he said, "for once we 'll enjoy

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the luxury of being passengers, if it 's all the same to you. We 've had rather a rough time, one way and another, and just at present there 's no shortage of funds. But that 's another story. I 'll tell you all about it later. Meanwhile, if you could oblige us with a decent square meal, we 'd appreciate it a whole lot."

"Sure!" said the captain, turning to one of the hands. "Slip below and tell Bill Barnes to fix these men up with something special as a treat."

"Barnes!" repeated Dave, with a puzzled look. "He does n't happen to be a comical-looking chap with one tooth and bushy eyebrows, does he?"

"I guess that 's his photograph," said the skipper, amused. "Do you know him?"

Dave, hardly waiting to reply, dived after the sailor to the galley, and astonished his old friend of the *Pacific Queen* by bursting in upon him.

"Great Mackerel, kid! Sha'n't I ever get clear of you?" exclaimed that worthy, wiping his greasy hands as he came toward the boy. "Who in thun-

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der would have thought of this? Jerusalem, but I am glad to see you! What d'you mean by bobbing up out of the sea like this?" His face had grown red with astonishment, and he was performing gymnastics with his mighty eyebrows.

"Been treasure-hunting, dear Barnsey," said Dave. "Come on, pour out some of that stew. We're starved. Haven't had a proper sailor's meal since goodness knows—"

"Treasure-hunting!" spluttered the cook, as he filled a dish with savory-smelling stew. "You've got the brains of a caterpillar. Haven't you learnt yet to stick to your job? Treasure-hunting, indeed!" he snorted.

"Wait till we've finished dinner, Barnsey," said Dave, "and then I'll tell you something that will make you sing a different tune!"

Nearly four weeks later the *Seven Seas* entered the Golden Gate, and deposited Dave, Tempest, and the Kanaka at San Francisco, where Tempest

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immediately took steps to turn the platinum into money. He found that he had slightly underestimated its value. After deducting the five thousand dollars for his farm, he placed the balance in a bank in Dave's name, and it was a proud moment for the boy when he made out one check for Mr. Cresswell, one for the passage-money on the *Seven Seas*, and one for current expenses. Jim was arrayed in bright colors, such as gladden the heart of his kind, and his cup of joy was filled when Dave and Tempest showed him the sights of the city in a fleet taxicab. He soon grew weary of city life, however, and on the second day insisted on joining an outward-bound steamer for China.

"Tempest," the boy said when they had seen him off, "I 'm going to ask a favor of you. We 'll be traveling together as far as Chicago, anyway. Won't you come on to New York and stop a few days with me before you go south? Dad will want to see you, and—and I want you to meet him; and Aunt Martha, too. Will you?"

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"Well, it 's a long time, Dave, since I 've mingled in polite society," replied Tempest, with a smile; "but I 'd like mighty well to see your folks, and so, if you think they won't mind entertaining a tramp—"

"Tramp!" Dave exclaimed, indignantly. "Don't be silly! And anyway," he added, laughing, "tramps don't buy five-thousand-dollar farms!"

"That 's so," replied Tempest. "After this I 'm a regular farmer. And you 're a—a—what are you, by the way, with all that money in the bank?"

"I 'm—" Dave hesitated. Then, "I 'm just your chum," he finished shyly. "Come on, let 's beat it for the train!"

THE END





